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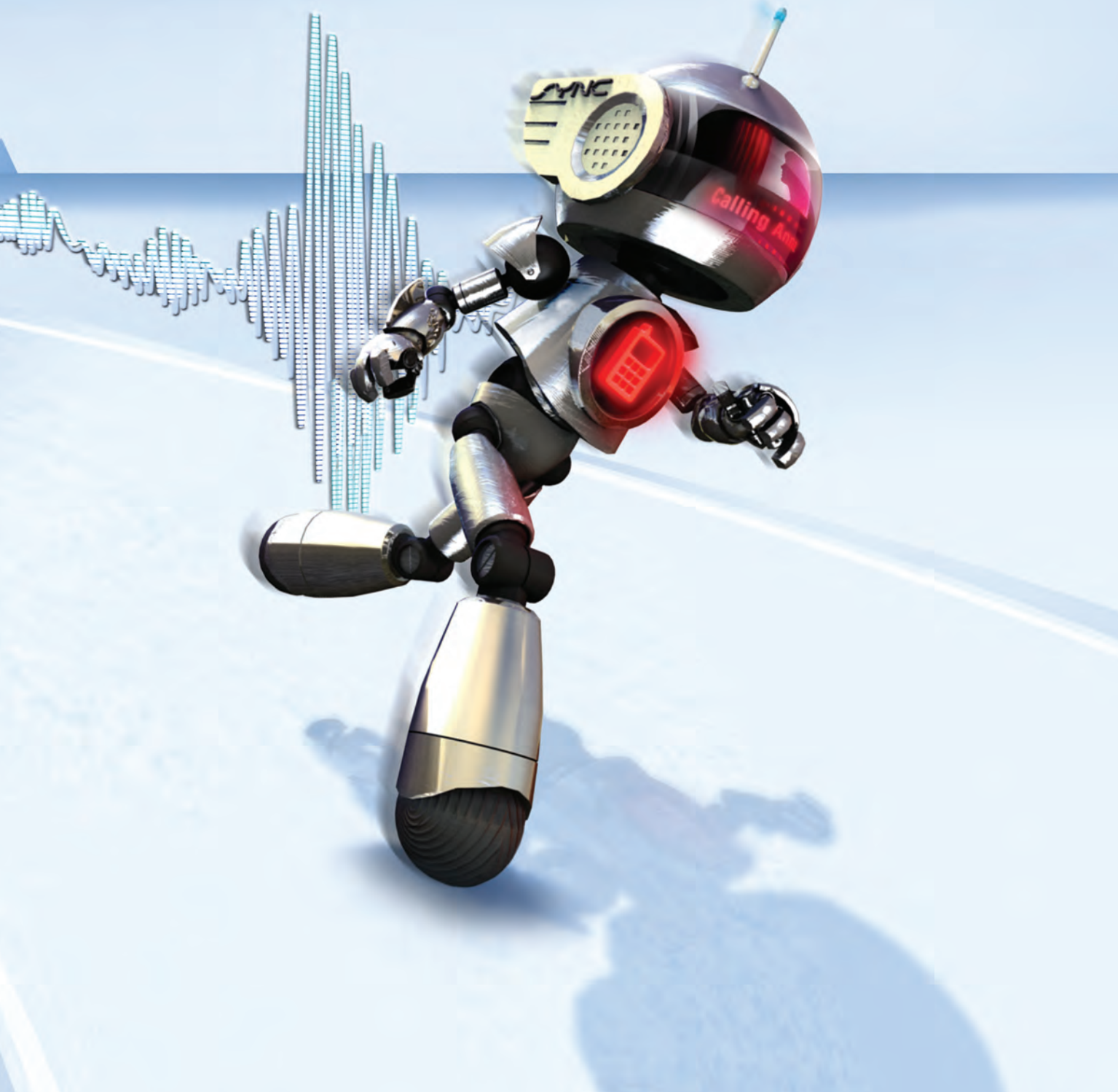

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Cover photo by Pier Nicola D'Amico

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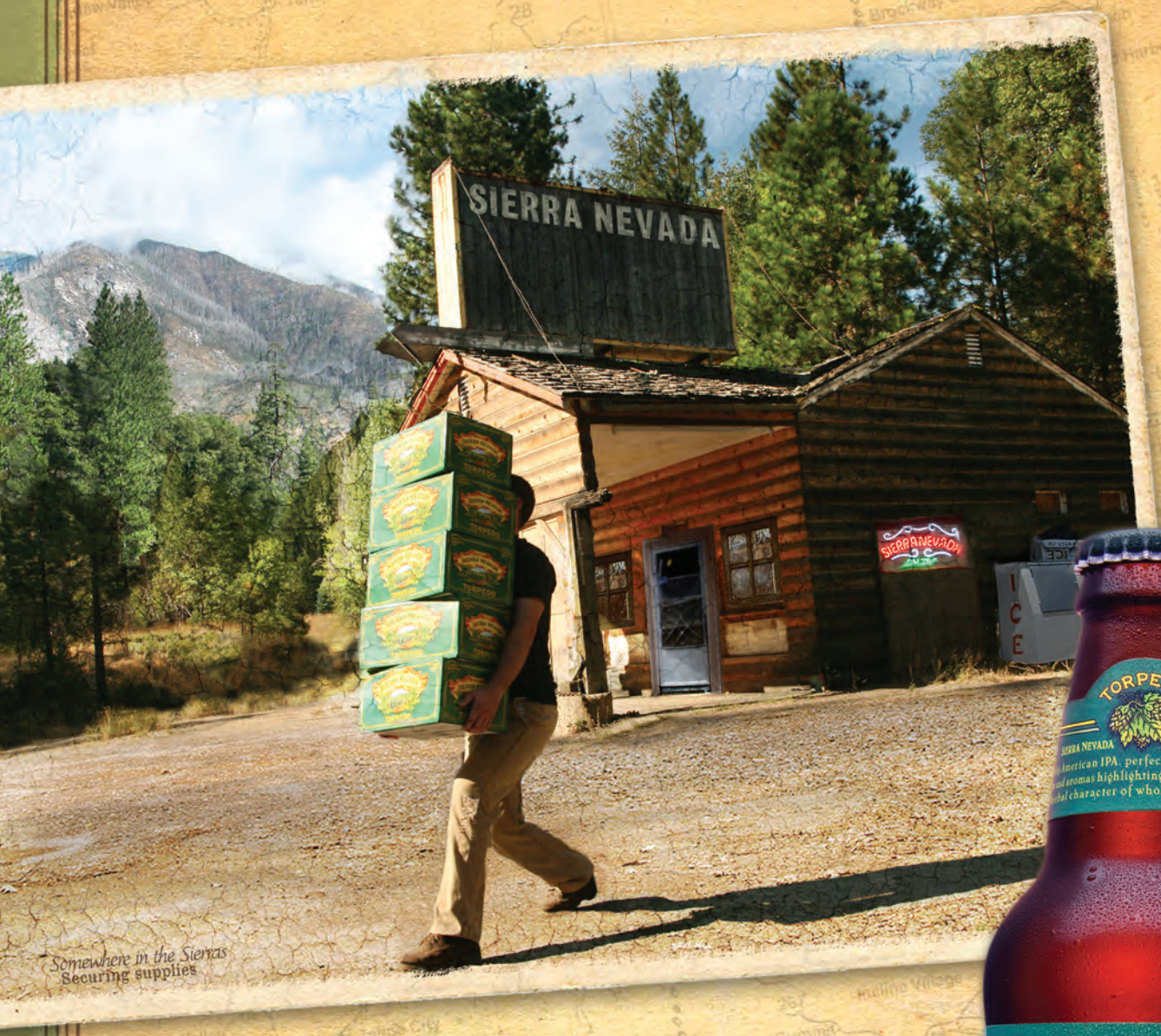

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EDITORIAL

BY JOSH JACKSON

NO PRESSURE, 2010...

For many artists, the weight of expectations can be too much. Bands who labored joyfully in anonymity crafting a first record can easily get distracted by the spotlight and find themselves staring down the sophomore slump. Others avoid obsessing over what the masses want, and follow the same creative impulses that made people care in the first place.

In this issue, which spans the new year, we take a quick peek back at the best of 2009, but also look ahead at what's to come. With its historic recession, rampant unemployment and unending wars, many of us won't be sad to say goodbye to the last year of the aughts. Countless companies were forced to close their doors this year, and quite a few magazines stopped publishing altogether; *Paste* might have been among them except for the valiant efforts of our readers via the Save Paste campaign (thanks again!). As we emerge victorious, reenergized and full of hope, we profile 10 musicians, films and TV shows that have us excited for 2010.

Leading the charge are two artists whose surprisingly successful 2008 debuts hefted huge weights onto their shoulders. Vampire Weekend's unbelievably catchy Afro-pop led to the kind of instant popularity usually reserved for *American Idol* contestants and choreographed weddings. While some backlash began even before the album was released, it was almost universally praised among critics. But everyone was left wondering if the band could recapture the magic. We think they have, and the new album *Contra* drops Jan. 12, so you'll soon be able to judge for yourself. Santigold learned that ignoring genre boundaries can make for a boundless audience. Her follow-up is tentatively scheduled to arrive later in the year, and we can't wait to see what she comes up with next.

Meanwhile, TV phenomenon *Lost* will do its best to wrap things up with a bang in 2010, while AMC's underappreciated *Breaking Bad* is just now beginning to fire on all cylinders. Directors Michael Haneke and Tim Burton look to deliver two very different but equally alluring films this year. And a decade after breaking up, a series of upcoming Pavement reunion shows is already causing a stir.

As we raise a glass to Auld Lang Syne and make our resolutions (mine is to play more soccer—see more on pg. 32), we can do so with great expectations for the year to come.

Paste

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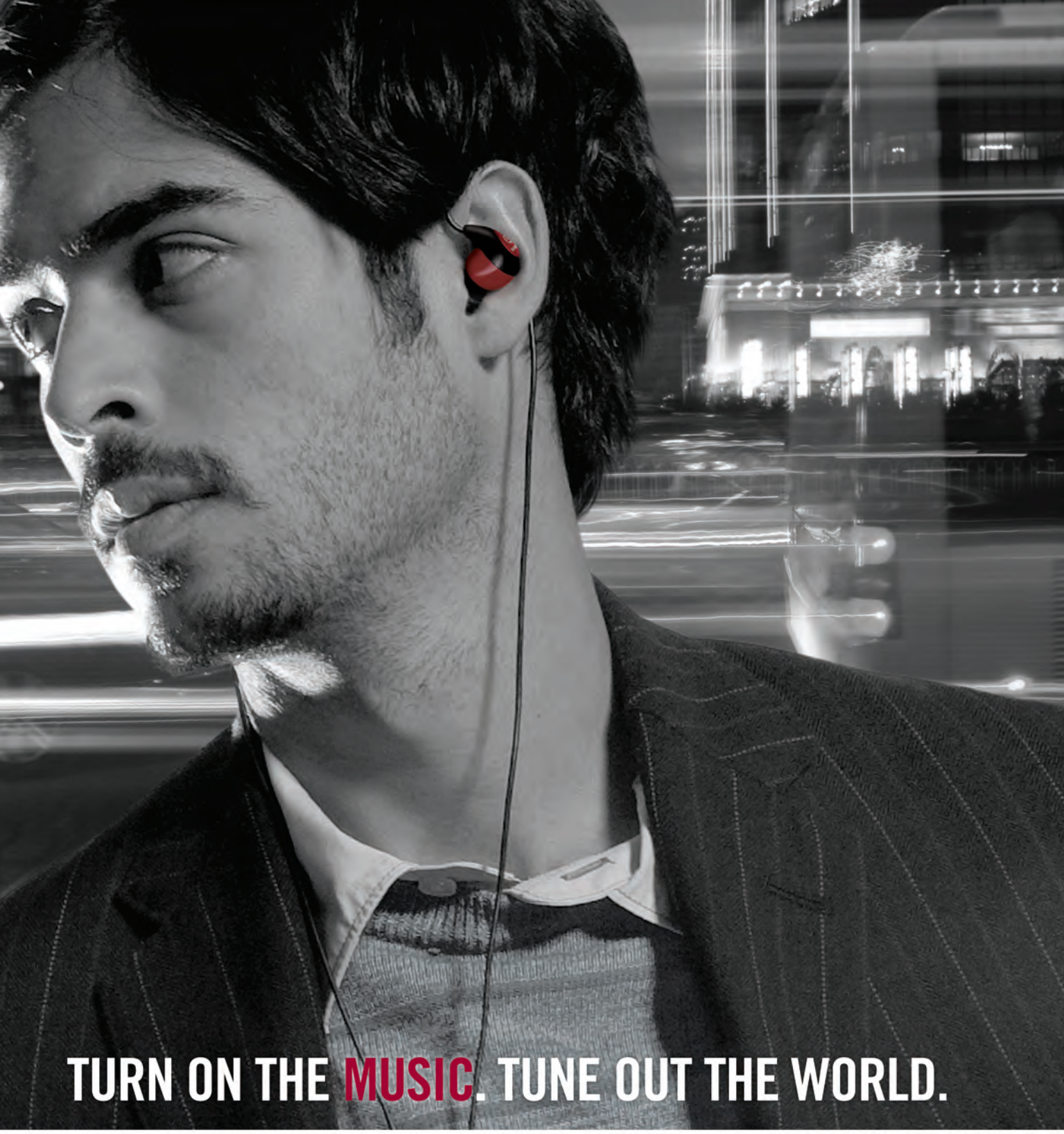

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INBOX

CROSSWORDS ACROSS THE GLOBE

I just got around to reading this summer's mini issues (I live overseas). My brother and I had great fun doing the crossword puzzles while chilling in the Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, airport on a recent vacation. Any crossword with the clue "Alt-country singer whose band is Her Boyfriends" is tops in my book. Another clue, "Sleeping-sickness-carrying fly," was quite topical for me, even prescient. Tsetses pestered us throughout our safari in the Serengeti.

BROOKE HARRIS { Doha, Qatar }

OFF ON DAVID GRAY... AND OFF-RHYME

I have to disagree with the review of the new David Gray release *Draw the Line* in Issue #56. Slant rhyme has its roots in Irish, Scottish, Welsh and Icelandic verse, where David's roots are (his *White Ladder* CD went multiplatinum with his Irish fan base), therefore I doubt he's unfamiliar with the concept. Also, calling his new release hookless, humorless, mid-tempo muck seems a little strange coming from a magazine that voted She & Him album of the year in 2008. Nothing against She & Him, I just don't see how it can be voted album of the year and *Draw the Line* can get such a bad review. Maybe too much time was spent at the Brick Store Pub for lunch that day?

RICK FOWLER { via email }

A PASSION FOR BRANDI CARLILE

I just finished reading Rachael Maddux's recent piece on Brandi Carlile's latest album—*Give Up the Ghost*—and wanted to thank *Paste* for publishing one of the best articles I've read in music journalism this year. I'm the general manager and a DJ at my college radio station, and in all my years of breathing and appreciating great art, I have never felt so moved by the way she captured a musician's character and timeless relevance. I felt like the raw honesty and natural passion of Rachael's writing style actually personified Carlile's musical style. I have never felt so inspired!

ROXANNE TETI { Santa Barbara, Calif. }

It's so hard to find a magazine that covers all the good things like you do, especially American singers who aren't that well known in the U.K. I'm a fairly new reader, but you've kept me reading every month. Especially after Rachael Maddux's review of Brandi Carlile's *Give Up the Ghost* (*Paste* #56). I've tried so hard for ages to explain what Carlile does that makes me such a massive fan, and there it was, summarized in one little review!

L.G. JONES { Cardiff, Wales }

BEST OF THE DECADE

Your top-50 list was solid, but one egregious omission was Sun Kil Moon's *Ghosts of the Great Highway*. While it lacked the buzz of some of the heavy hitters, it belongs in the discussion for tops of the decade based on all-around musical and lyrical quality. Mark Kozelek is one of the most underappreciated artists of our generation, and I was a bit disappointed that his masterpiece didn't make the cut.

GEORGE STEVENS { Charleston, S.C. }

Paste

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ALBUMS OF THE DECADE: ONLINE COMMENTERS STRIKE BACK

Surprised to see Gentleman Jesse on the list. I can't get enough of that album. The only thing I wish was on the list is an Andrew Bird album. **SARA**

Nothing from Neko Case? *Blacklisted*, *Fox Confessor Brings the Flood* or *Middle Cyclone* could easily make the list. New Pornographers, too (though I'd put Neko before them, Carl's songwriting is deserving as well). **DARCY MCGEE**

It's a travesty to have listed none of the Pernice Brothers records. *Yours, Mine and Ours* is way better than most on your list. Joe Pernice mixes bittersweet lyrics with catchy melodies, creating a dichotomous brilliance I love. Shame on you! I demand a recount! **RYAN**

I don't really get why [The Decemberists'] *Picaresque* wasn't on there when *The Crane Wife* was. Also, while I haven't listened to *The College Dropout*, I don't think something by Kanye West can be better than something by Beck. And I'm surprised and confused at no *The Moon & Antarctica*. But thanks for not including Of Montreal. **SAMANTHA**

Glad to see that American Icon Loretta Lynn made the top 50 list, but #48? As a fan of this great artist (I've followed her legendary career since the mid '60s when I was a child), it's not a surprise that I feel *Van Lear Rose* should be #1. But thanks for including the greatest female country artist in history. **LARRY**

I and Love and You? Really? It just came out like 2 weeks ago, and it only has one strong track—the rest is almost laughable. *Emotionalism* would have been a better pick. **JASON**

How could you leave Destroyer out completely? *Rubies* and *This Night* and *Your Blues* are modern masterpieces. Bejar writes the best, most literate music out these days. A major oversight! He's way more talented than the hyper-affected Bright Eyes and many other artists on this list. My Morning Jacket's *It Still Moves* was also a really great record of the 2000s, as were Belle and Sebastian's *Dear Catastrophe Waitress*, and all of Joe Henry's work (*Tiny Voices* being my personal fave). Also, no love for Tom Waits' *Alice*, *Orphans*, *Blood Money* or *Real Gone*? Or Joe Strummer's *Streetcore*? Crazy, if you ask me. **BUDDY**

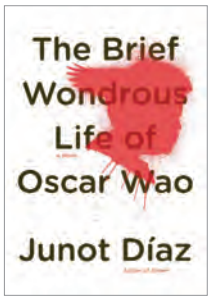
Generally a pretty respectable list, but it's truly ludicrous that *Love and Theft* by Bob Dylan isn't on the list. I would put it in the top 10. It's arguably one of the best five or 10 albums of his prodigious career. None of the albums on your list in the broadly folk-rock/singer/songwriter genre compare, as most of the artists themselves would probably agree. It's true that latter-day Dylan doesn't have the influence on musical trends he used to, but in terms of sheer album quality, *L&T* blows nearly all of these albums away. **JIM**

On PasteMagazine.com, we spent November ranking every imaginable aspect of popular culture from 2000-2009. The top TV shows? We got 'em. The best albums? You know it. The 20 best magazines (besides *Paste*)? Yes! We posted a new list every day of the month, and they're all archived on our site for your continued enjoyment.

Zach Galifinakis

Uncharted

THE 20 BEST LIVE ACTS OF THE DECADE THE 10 BEST COMEDIANS OF THE DECADE ↪ THE 10 BEST MEMES OF THE DECADE THE 50 BEST ALBUMS OF THE DECADE THE 50 BEST MOVIES OF THE DECADE ↪ THE 10 BEST VIDEO GAME CHARACTERS OF THE DECADE THE 20 BEST TV SHOWS OF THE DECADE THE 20 BEST VIDEO GAMES OF THE DECADE THE 20 BEST BOOKS OF THE DECADE THE 10 BEST MUSIC PRODUCERS OF THE DECADE THE 50 BEST MUSIC VIDEOS OF THE DECADE THE 25 BEST DOCUMENTARIES OF THE DECADE THE 10 BEST FOOD TV SHOWS OF THE DECADE THE 10 BEST CASUAL GAMES OF THE DECADE THE 12 BEST MUSIC BOOKS OF THE DECADE THE 25 BEST AMERICAN BREWERIES OF THE DECADE THE 10 BEST FASHION DESIGNERS OF THE DECADE THE 25 BEST ALBUM COVERS OF THE DECADE THE 25 BEST MOVIE PERFORMANCES OF THE DECADE THE 25 BEST LIVE MOMENTS ON TV THE 20 BEST GA GETS OF THE DECADE THE 10 BEST MOVIE SOUNDTRACKS OF THE DECADE THE 20 BEST MOVIE SCENES OF THE DECADE THE 10 BEST DEBUT NOVELS OF THE DECADE ↪ THE 10 BEST TV GUEST APPEARANCES OF THE DECADE THE 20 BEST MAGAZINES OF THE DECADE THE 20 BEST GRAPHIC NOVELS OF THE DECADE THE 7 BEST PASTE 7 PICKS OF THE DECADE THE 10 BEST PASTE MAGAZINE COVERS OF THE DECADE THE 25 BEST COVER SONGS OF THE DECADE



Reviews of new movies *Invictus, Sherlock Holmes* and *Avatar*, plus the debut album from BlakRoc and a new Animal Collective EP.

Add your own user rating to anything reviewed in this issue!

Live performances by (from top, then left to right) Brandi Carlile, Headlights, Alberta Cross and Lissie.

ONLINE Throughout the magazine, this symbol denotes additional content online. Visit **PasteMagazine.com/December09.**

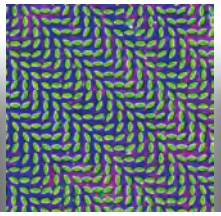
Brandi Carlile and Headlights photos by Sarah Linebaugh. Alberta Cross and Lissie photos by Morgan Cogswell. Zach Galifinakis photo by Matthew Rogers.

BEST OF 2009

We spent the month of November considering the Best of the Decade, from albums and TV shows to books and comedians. But lest we forget all the great music and film that came out in the last 12 months, here are our picks for the Best of 2009. Visit PasteMagazine.com for more lists of what we loved this year.

BEST ALBUMS OF 2009

1. The Avett Brothers: *I and Love and You* [Columbia]



2. Animal Collective: *Merriweather Post Pavilion* [Domino]

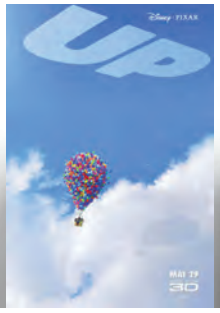
3. Elvis Perkins in Dearland: *Elvis Perkins In Dearland* [XL]

4. The Low Anthem: *Oh My God, Charlie Darwin* [Nonesuch]

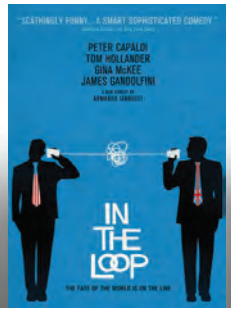
5. David Bazan: *Curse Your Branches* [Barsuk]

6 Brandi Carlile: *Give Up The Ghost* [Columbia]
7. The Decemberists: *The Hazards of Love* [Capitol]
8. Phoenix: *Wolfgang Amadeus Phoenix* [Glassnote]
9 Neko Case *Middle Cyclone* [ANTI-]
10. Frank Turner *Poetry of the Deed* [Epitaph]
11. Grizzly Bear: *Veckatimest* [Warp]
12. Camera Obscura: *My Maudlin Career* [4AD]
13. Monsters of Folk: *Monsters of Folk* [Shangri-La]
14. Dirty Projectors: *Bitte Orca* [Domino]
15. Thao with the Get Down Stay Down: *Know Better Learn Faster* [Kill Rock Stars]
16. Passion Pit: *Manners* [Frenchkiss]
17. The Antlers: *Hospice* [Frenchkiss]
18. The Flaming Lips: *Embryonic* [Warner Bros.]
19. Mastodon: *Crack the Skye* [Reprise]
20. Wild Light: *Adult Nights* [StarTime International]
21. Wilco: *Wilco* (The Album) [Nonesuch]
22. Sufjan Stevens: *The BQE* [Asthmatic Kitty]
23. Yeah Yeah Yeahs: *It's Blitz!* [Interscope]
24. Various Artists: *Dark Was The Night* [Beggars Group]
25. Thomas Function: *In the Valley of Sickness* [Fat Possum]

BEST FILMS OF 2009

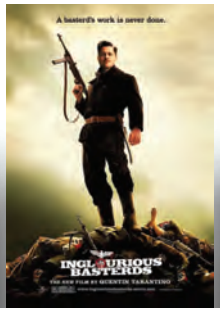


1. *Up* Directors: Pete Docter, Bob Peterson [Walt Disney/Pixar]



2. *In the Loop* Director: Armando Iannucci [IFC Films]

3. *That Evening Sun* Director: Scott Teems [Freestyle Releasing]



4. *Inglourious Basterds* Director: Quentin Tarantino [The Weinstein Co.]

5. *The Road* Director: John Hillcoat [Dimension Films]

6. *35 Shots of Rum* Director: Claire Denis [The Cinema Guild]
7. *The Hurt Locker* Director: Kathryn Bigelow [Summit Entertainment]
8. *Coraline* Director: Henry Selick [Universal/Focus Features]
9. *Summer Hours* Director: Olivier Assayas [IFC Films]
10. *Fantastic Mr. Fox* (Wes Anderson) [Twentieth Century Fox/Fox Searchlight]
11. *A Serious Man* Directors: Joel Coen & Ethan Coen [Focus Features]
12. *Sugar* Directors: Anna Boden, Ryan Fleck [HBO Films/Sony Pictures Classics]
13. *Star Trek* Director: J.J. Abrams [Paramount Pictures]
14. *Revanche* Director: Götz Spielmann [Janus Films]
15. *Anvil! The Story of Anvil* Director: Sacha Gervasi [Abramorama]
16. *Forbidden Lie$* Director: Anna Broinowski [Roxie Releasing]
17. *Still Walking* Director: Hirokazu Kore-eda [IFC]
18. *Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince* Director: David Yates [Warner Bros.]
19. *District 9* Director: Neill Blomkamp [TriStar Pictures]
20. Where the Wild Things Are Director: Spike Jonze [Warner Bros.]
21. *Food, Inc.* Director: Robert Kenner [Magnolia Pictures]
22. *Ponyo* Director: Hayao Miyazaki [Walt Disney]
23. *Beeswax* Director: Andrew Bujalski [The Cinema Guild]
24. *Drag Me to Hell* Director: Sam Raimi [Universal]
25. *The Informant!* Director: Steven Soderbergh [Warner Bros.]

PASTE SAMPLER

ISSUE 59

1. SHERWOOD "Not Gonna Love"

(N. Henry / D. Koch / M. Leibovich) from *QU.* ℗2009 00 de Lally Publishing (ASCAP). Courtesy of MySpace Records. **Hometown:** San Francisco **Website:** sherwoodmusic.net

2. FREE ENERGY "Free Energy"

(P. Sprangers / S. Wells) from *Stuck on Nothing.* ℗2009 Spirit Warrior Music (ASCAP) / Singing Horns Music (ASCAP). Courtesy of DFA LLC. Under license to EMI Records Ltd. & Astralwerks. **Hometown:** Philadelphia **Website:** freeenergymusic.com **(PG. 29)**

3. LISSIE "Little Lovin" (E. Maurus / A. Petraglia) from *Why You Runnin'.* ℗2009 Lissie Elisabeth Publishing / Slanky Dank / Songs of Winds. Courtesy of Fat Possum Records. **Hometown:** Rock Island, Ill. **Website:** myspace.com/lissiemusic **(PG. 28)**

4. TOM WAITS "Fannin Street" (T. Waits) from *Glitter & Doom Live.* ℗2009 Jalma Music. Courtesy of ANTI- records. **Hometown:** Los Angeles **Website:** tomwaits.com **(PG. 56)**

5. THE GRATES "Burn Bridges" (The Grates) from *Teeth Lost, Hearts Won.* ℗2008 Universal Music Publishing MGB. Australia PTY LTD (ASCAP). Courtesy of Dew-Process. **Hometown:** Brisbane, Australia **Website:** thegrates.com

6. LAURA VEIRS "Life Is Good Blues"

(L.Veirs) from *July Flame.* ℗2010 Freak Off The Leash Music (BMI), admin. by Bug. Courtesy of Raven Marching Band Records. **Hometown:** Portland, Ore. **Website:** lauraveirs.com **(PG. 58)**

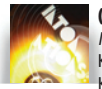
7. THE DRUMS "Let's Go Surfing"

(J. Pierce) from *Summertime.* ℗2009 Laundry Boy Music (SESAC). Courtesy of Holiday Records. **Hometown:** Brooklyn, N.Y. **Website:** wearethedrums.com **(PG. 26)**

8. MR. GNOME "Plastic Shadow"

(N. Meister / S. Meister) from *Heave Yer Skeleton.* ℗2009 El Marko Records and Publishing, Ltd. (ASCAP). Courtesy of El Marko Records. **Hometown:** Cleveland **Website:** mrgnome.com

9. TIMBER TIMBRE "Lay Down In The Tall Grass" (T. Kirk) from *Timber Timbre.* ℗2009 Arts & Crafts Music (SOCAN). Courtesy of Arts & Crafts. **Hometown:** Brooklin, Ontario, Canada **Website:** timbertimbre.com

10. LOWELL BRAMS "Alpha to Theta (edit)" (L. Brams / S. Stevens) from *Music For Insomnia.* ℗2009 Asthmatic Kitty Records. Courtesy of Asthmatic Kitty Records. **Hometown:** Lander, Wyo. **Website:** asthmatickitty.com **(PG. 61)**


11. LOS CAMPESINOS! "There Are Listed Buildings" (Harriet and Tom) from *Romance is Boring.* ℗2009 Los Campesinos!, under exclusive license to Arts & Crafts Productions Inc. for North America. Courtesy of Arts & Crafts. **Hometown:** Cardiff, Wales **Website:** loscampesinos.com

12. HALF-HANDED CLOUD "Once, Twice, Seven Times a Werewolf" (Half-Handed Cloud) from *Cut Me Down & Count My Rings.* ℗2009 New Jerusalem Music (ASCAP). Courtesy of Asthmatic Kitty Records. **Hometown:** Berkeley, Calif. **Website:** halfhandedcloud.com **(PG. 61)**

13. TRENT DABBS "Inside These Lines" (T. Dabbs / J. Kenney) from *Your Side Now.* ℗2009 Ready Set Publishing (BMI) / Carver Music, Almo Music Corp. (ASCAP). Courtesy of Ready Set Records. **Hometown:** Nashville **Website:** trentdabbs.com

14. DAVE RAWLINGS MACHINE "Ruby" (D. Rawlings / G. Welch) from *A Friend of a Friend.* ℗2009 Cracklin' Music, admin. by Bug (BMI) / Say Uncle Music (BMI). Courtesy of Acony Records. **Hometown:** Nashville **Website:** daverawlingsmachine.com

15. THE SOFT PACK "Answer To Yourself" (The Soft Pack) from *The Soft Pack.* ℗2009. Courtesy of Kemado Records. **Hometown:** San Diego **Website:** thesoftpackofficial.com **(PG. 30)**

16. RICKIE LEE JONES "Old Enough" feat. Ben Harper from *Balm In Gilead.* ℗2009 Rickie Lee Jones. Under exclusive license to Concord Music Group, Inc. **Hometown:** Los Angeles **Website:** rickieleejones.com

17. JILL ANDREWS "City Noise" (J. Andrews) from *Jill Andrews* EP. ℗2009 Silver Garden Music (ASCAP). Courtesy of Liam Records. **Hometown:** Knoxville, Tenn. **Website:** jillandrews.com

18. TAYLOR HOLLINGSWORTH "Trail of Tears" (T. Hollingsworth) from *Life With A Slow Ear.* ℗2009 Team Love Records / Sexy Elephant Songs (ASCAP). Courtesy of Team Love Records. **Hometown:** Birmingham, Ala. **Website:** taylorhollingsworth.com

19. MATT MORRIS "The Un-American"

(M. Morris) from *When Everything Breaks Open.* ℗2010 Mass Transit Music (BMI). Courtesy of Tennman Records. **Hometown:** Denver **Website:** mattmorris.net

20. OBERHOFER "Away FRM U" (B. Oberhofer) from *oOOOoOOOo.* ℗2009 Brad Oberhofer. **Hometown:** Tacoma, Wash. **Website:** myspace.com/oberhofermusic

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21. HOLOPAW "The Art Teacher and the Little Stallion" (Holopaw) from *Oh, Glory. Oh, Wilderness.* ℗2009 88's + good #'s (BMI). Courtesy of Bakery Outlet Records. **Hometown:** Gainesville, Fla. **Website:** holopawmusic.com **(PG. 66)**

22. MATTHEW RYAN "City Life"

(M. Ryan) from *Dear Lover.* ℗2009 Plastic Violin (BMI). Courtesy of The Dear Future Collective. **Hometown:** West View, Tenn. **Website:** matthewryanonline.com

23. VAN GHOST "Summer Promise"

(M.H. Berg & Van Ghost) from *Melodies for Lovers.* ℗2009 Melodies for Lovers Publishing (ASCAP). Courtesy of Split Red Records. **Hometown:** Chicago **Website:** vanghost.com

24. HIS & HER VANITIES "Hits Like Hail" (R. Riemer / T. Riemer) from *The Mighty Lunge.* ℗2009 Swim Swim Munch (ASCAP). Courtesy of Science of Sound Records. **Hometown:** Madison, Wisc. **Website:** myspace.com/hishervanities

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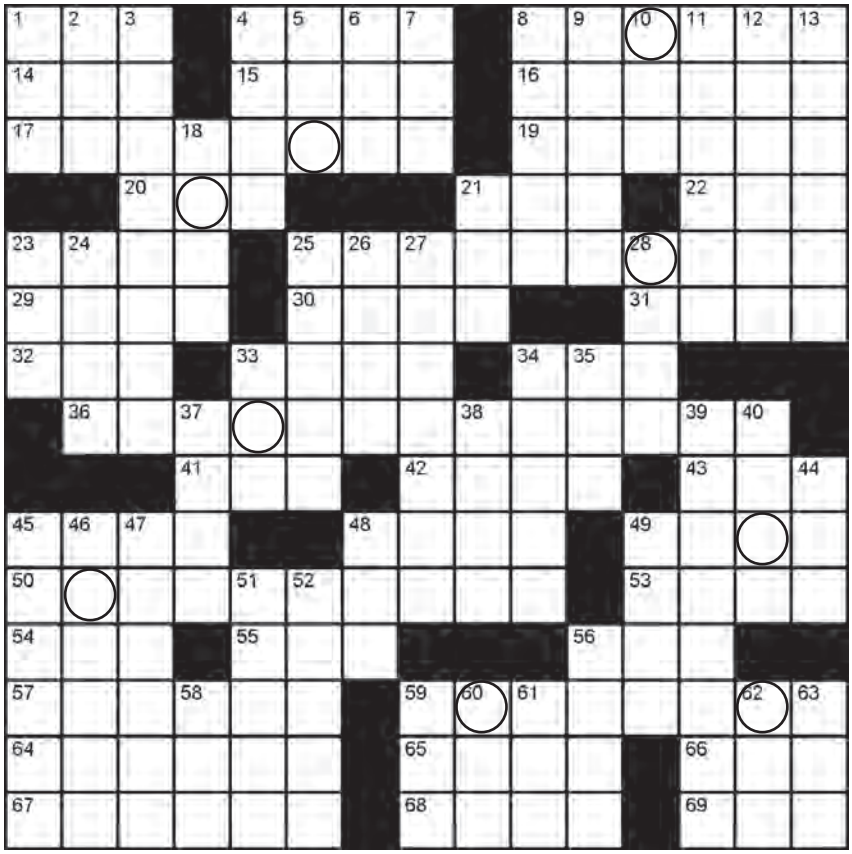
CROSSWORD

SHE AND HIM

BY BRENDAN EMMETT QUIGLEY
(BRENDANEMMETTQUIGLEY.COM)



ACROSS

1 Clinker
4 Kim Deal's post-Breeders band
8 Hawaiian fish
14 Muff
15 Lampblack
16 Chanteuse Heap
17 "The Choice Is Yours" rappers
19 Went to the Halloween party dressed up
20 Passing fancies
21 Diagnostic proc.
22 Geometric prefix
23 Cartoon dog
25 Excel tables
29 Potter's tool?
30 Soft-soap
31 Research facil.
32 Repair shop fig.
33 Lisa's brother
34 ___ Romano (*Mad Men* art director)
36 Closely following
41 Bank acct. entry
42 Grand Ole ___
43 Rebellious Turner
45 Eminem song about a fanboy
48 Stick in the fridge?
49 Teases
50 Bert's job in *Mary Poppins*
53 Annul
54 Presidential inits.
55 Building annex
56 Shelley poem
57 Kay Thompson character
59 1980 David Bowie hit
64 Got more life from
65 Poodle name
66 Ohio team, on scoreboards
67 Weigh
68 U.F.C. calls
69 "No Scrubs" group

DOWN

1 Society girl
2 www.pitchfork.com
3 Make a member of little by little
4 Invites
5 Israel's Dayan
6 "Ulalume" poet
7 "Interstate Love Song" band, for short
8 Millionths of a meter
9 "Everybody Ought to Have ___"
10 Phrase mouthed at a TV camera
11 Like kids in 4th grade
12 Symbols of love
13 More than urge
18 Rang, as church bells
21 O.A.S. member: Abbr.
23 Get behind
24 100-meter, e.g.
25 Limited
26 After-dinner drink
27 What a dump!
28 Aussie lassie
33 Voyage preceder?
34 Razor sharpener
35 It may finish second
37 Poker?
38 Olympic blade
39 Sans intermission
40 Punished, a la a pirate
44 Chicken general?
45 Eyeball membrane
46 Thumb protectors
47 Some pears
48 Hooter
49 Dojo discipline
51 Column of boxes on a questionnaire
52 Mushers' vehicles
56 Mayberry sot
58 Sussex suffix
59 Astern
60 Arab chief
61 BART stop
62 Beach souvenir
63 Instant

PASTE AUDIOBOOK SAMPLER

ISSUE 59

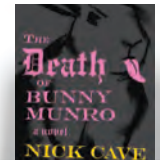
WELCOME TO *PASTE*'S SECOND AUDIOBOOK SAMPLER. WHETHER YOU PREFER YOUR BOOKS VIA EARBUDS OR PAPER, OUR AUDIOBOOK SAMPLER LETS YOU HAVE A TASTE OF SOME GREAT WORKS VIA MP3. EACH SELECTION BELOW IS FEATURED AT PASTEMAGAZINE.COM/SAMPLER, ALONGSIDE OUR USUAL MUSIC SAMPLER (LOG-IN DETAILS BELOW). WE'VE GOT IT ALL HERE—FICTION, NON-FICTION, A KIDS' BOOK, A CHRISTMAS STORY AND A NOVEL BY A ROCKSTAR. SWEET.

1. AUGUSTEN BURROUGHS

You Better Not Cry: Stories for Christmas

Reader: Augusten Burroughs – "Chapter 1: You Better Not Cry" © 2009 Augusten Burroughs. Ⓟ 2009, Macmillan Audio. Courtesy of Macmillian Audio.

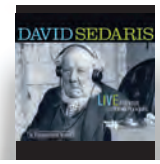
Web: MacmillanAudio.com. **(PG. 23)**



2. NICK CAVE

The Death of Bunny Munro

Reader: Nick Cave – "Chapter 1" © 2009 Nick Cave and Warren Ellis. Ⓟ 2009, Canongate Audiobooks. Courtesy of Macmillian Audio. **Web:** MacmillanAudio.com.

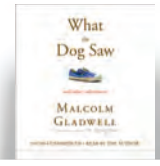


3. DAVID SEDARIS

Live For Your Listening Pleasure

Reader: David Sedaris – An Excerpt from "Laugh Kookaburra" David Sedaris' *Live For Your Listening Pleasure*. © 2009 by David Sedaris Ⓟ 2009 by Hachette Audio, a division of Hachette. Courtesy Hachette Audio.

Web: HachetteAudio.com.



4. MALCOLM GLADWELL

What the Dog Saw

Reader: Malcolm Gladwell – "The Art of Failure: Why Some People Choke and Others Panic." © 2009 by Malcolm Gladwell. Ⓟ 2009 by Hachette Audio, a division of Hachette. Courtesy Hachette Audio. **Web:** HachetteAudio.com.

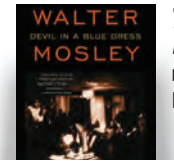
5. ROALD DAHL

Fantastic Mr. Fox Reader: Roald Dahl - Excerpt © 1970 Roald Dahl. Ⓟ 1978, 2005 HarperAudio, HarperCollins Publishers. Courtesy of HarperAudio, HarperCollins Publishers. **Web:** HarperCollins.com

6. DIAMOND RIO WITH TOM ROLAND

Beautiful Mess: The Story of Diamond Rio

Reader: Diamond Rio and Scott McKain - "Introduction" and "Chapters 1-2." © 2009 Diamond Rio. Courtesy of Diamond Rio & Thomas Nelson, Inc. **Web:** DiamondRio.com



7. WALTER MOSLEY

Devil in a Blue Dress Reader: Michael Boatman - Excerpt. Published 2009 by Audible, Inc. Courtesy of Audible.com.

8. PAOLO BACIGALUPI

The Windup Girl Reader: Jonathan Davis and Paolo Bacigalupi - Excerpt. Published 2009 by Audible Frontiers. Courtesy of Audible.com.

9. STUART NEVILLE

The Ghosts of Belfast Reader: Gerard Doyle - Excerpt. Published 2009 by Audible, Inc. Courtesy of Audible.com.

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LONGPLAYER, FOODIE ROCK, **ROBERT HILBURN**, AUGUSTEN BURROUGHS, **ROCHEFORT 10**, OLIVER STONE'S *WALL STREET 2* **AND MORE**

SOULBIRD TAKES WING IN IRAQ

MUSICIAN OFFERS SHELTER TO ENDANGERED ARTISTS

"Sorry we had to meet like this," Timothy Brady says with a grin as he enters his friend's drab apartment. "I'm basically homeless—I figured this would be easier." It's a cool, rainy October day on the eastern edge of midtown Atlanta. Brady, 25, is slim and soft-spoken, his curly hair wet and matted. In a few days, he'll fly to Istanbul and trek to Erbil, the capital of Iraqi Kurdistan, to teach music and open the Soulbird American Academy of Kurdistan, a safe haven for artists in a region where they're targets for torture and murder.

Brady graduated from Emory University in 2007 and spent time playing with the band One Hand Loves the Other in New York City, where he quickly became disenchanted with the parochial nature of American art. "I think after 9/11 and two wars it's difficult to justify doing art that's so insular," he says. "Artists have a responsibility to project their creative growth outward, and address the world around them." In 2007, he founded Soulbird Inc., a nonprofit that uses art as a vehicle for social change. He spent the next summer in Erbil teaching a workshop on music composition, which catalyzed his decision to create the academy.

Performers had been persecuted under Saddam Hussein's regime, Brady notes, but the chaos following the American invasion allowed extremists to enact a campaign of violence against artists of every stripe. Though Kurdistan remains relatively safe, simply carrying an instrument case in Iraq makes you a target. "In Baghdad and Mosul, you can't play piano or do theatre," Brady explains, raising his voice for the first time in our conversation. "You could be killed for it."

Funding shortfalls have forced Soulbird to keep its enrollment terms at a length of two months. Still, Brady hopes it will expand to a yearlong program and help students acquire visas or citizenship in the United States. "We're so fortunate to live in a society where we're free to express ourselves—artistically and creatively—without having to fear for our lives," he says. "We have a responsibility to help Iraq, and we can't just rely on our military to help them achieve a free and open society. Art is a way to do that."

MICHAEL SABA | ILLUSTRATION BY DANIEL KRALL

IN THE KEY OF EON

LONGPLAYER CELEBRATES ITS FIRST DECADE OF CONSTANT PERFORMANCE—ONLY 99 MORE TO GO

Looking out from the top of Trinity Buoy Wharf Lighthouse in London's Docklands on a bright autumn day, the sun reflects off the Thames in a straight line to the O2 concert arena. As though responding to the sun, the lighthouse emits ghostly sounds that echo across the river—the lingering bell-like resonance of a struck bowl, overtones that resound through the building and beyond. Since Dec. 31, 1999, the music has played every minute of every day from listening posts such as this, as well as online. And if all goes as planned, it will continue to do so for another 990 years.

When planning a musical welcome to the new millennium in the late '90s, Jem Finer's response could've been obvious: a party, a show, a song. As a founding member of Irish folk-punk pioneers The Pogues, Finer has spent a good chunk of the past 25 years creating legendary songs and performing raucous gigs. But as a conceptual artist, his work engages in themes of a less ephemeral nature.

"The idea of making something a thousand years long was in response to what I saw as an absurdity," Finer says. "Most people were talking about the millennium in spans of time like a night's party, or a weekend celebration." And so Finer came up with *Longplayer*—a piece of music that takes exactly 1,000 years to perform—as well as the mechanism to ensure the work's completion.

Musically, *Longplayer* is remarkably simple: A small number of sections play in slowly but constantly shifting sequences so that no exact alignment of sections recurs for ten centuries. The instrumentation—Tibetan singing bowls—and organization are simple to play for a human or a computer, so it's impervious to technological change. The epic composition emanates from an outdated Mac resting on a plain wooden shelf on the main floor of the lighthouse. Climb to the top and you'll find yourself alone in a conical room, looking out at fits of activity—office towers, 2012 Olympic sites, the immigrant community of Tower Hamlets—that seem like momentary trends compared to the lovely, eternal atmospheric hum.

"Initially, it wasn't even about creating a piece of music," Finer says. "It was about engaging time with a sense of the sublime—like looking up at a star and thinking, 'That light's taken a billion years to annihilate itself inside my retina.' I wanted to engage with time on *those* scales."

Since *Longplayer* began, Finer has interspersed his solo and Pogues projects with conceptual artwork including a two-year stint as Artist in Residence at Oxford's department of astrophysics. All the while, he had *Longplayer* on his mind, setting up a trust that administers the project in perpetuity, and creating the score for last September's first-ever live performance of 1,000 minutes of the piece, which Finer sees as an important milestone for music that's watched a decade of history pass.

"A lot of things we might not have worried about while designing *Longplayer* have become more complicated," says Finer. "Ideas of climate and energy, for example. So it's accruing a kind of philosophical weight, throwing up ideas it wasn't designed to do, which is thrilling. It's become the constant drone against which everything else changes."

JUSTIN HOPPER

Photo by Steve Pyke

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RECORDING ARTS SOCIETY

the PASTE MAGAZINE 10 OUR FAVORITE DECAGONAL BITS OF WHATEVER

1. **Steve LaBate, Associate Editor → The Rolling Stones' *Beggars Banquet*** Following a brief flirtation with psychedelia, the Stones came out raw, rootsy and rowdy as hell on their 10th album, setting the tone for their string of early-'70s Mick Taylor-era masterpieces.

2. **Nick Marino, Managing Editor → Interstate 10** I-95 gets all the glory, running up and down the East Coast, but this puppy cuts a straight shot across the entire country, from the shores of Florida to the bayous of New Orleans, through Texas and on to L.A. Reckless ass-haulers on I-10 may use the motorsports slang "ten-tenths," which means to drive flat-out. Be sure to explain that to the cops.

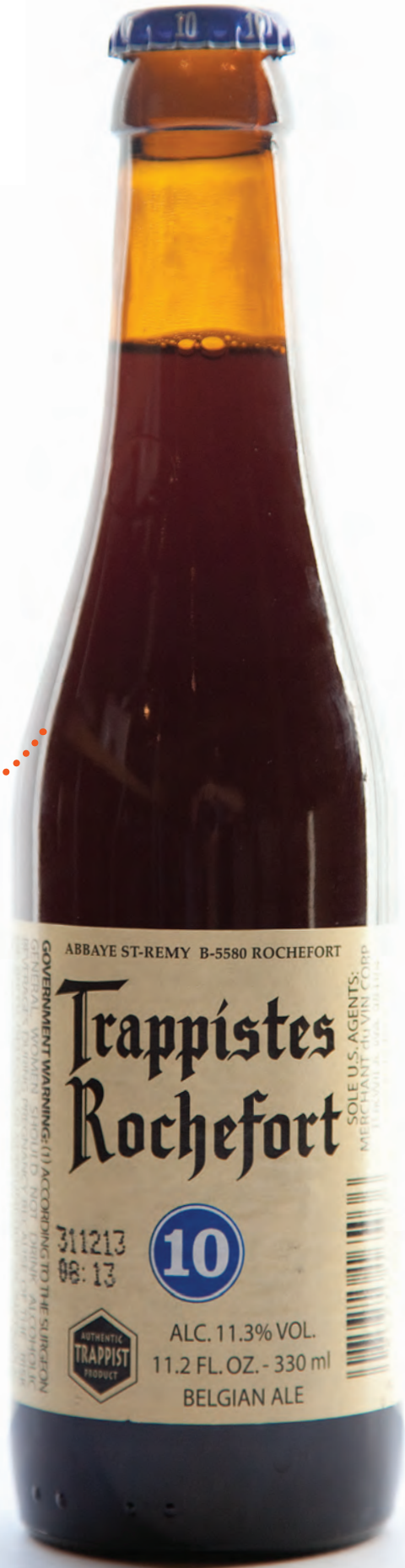
3. **Kevin Keller, Multimedia Producer → "Ten Dead Dogs" by Wild Sweet Orange** I first heard this song with a bunch of radio programming directors, who vowed never to play a song with such a gruesome title. I'm glad they changed their minds.

4. **Josh Jackson, Editor in Chief → Rochefort 10** Ben Franklin might not have actually said, "Beer is proof that God loves us and wants us to be happy," but that doesn't make it any less true. I'll heartily offer Rochefort 10 as Exhibit A. The Trappist Monks in Rochefort, Belgium, have been spreading their particular flavor of happiness since 1595. And with an alcohol content of 11.3%, a little love goes a long way.

5. **Nate Douglas, Music Sales Director → Pelé** The Brazilian soccer legend is the greatest athlete to ever wear the number 10—and the jersey is still generally reserved for the best player on a team.

6. **Rachael Maddux, Assistant Editor → "December 1963 (Oh What A Night)" by The Four Seasons** This was the #10 song on the Billboard radio charts on my 10th birthday—first released in 1975, it charted again in 1994 thanks to a remix by a Dutch DJ. I didn't have a roller-rink party that year, but all my friends did, and this was the song I most hoped would be played each time.

7. **Austin L. Ray, Web Editor → "The conscientious suntans."** The 10th sentence of my favorite book, Don DeLillo's *White Noise*.



↬ Trappistes Rochefort 10 photo by Josh Meister

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ROBERT HILBURN—POP-MUSIC CRITIC FOR THE *LOS ANGELES TIMES* FROM 1970 TO 2005—JUST RELEASED THE MEMOIR, *CORN FLAKES WITH JOHN LENNON: AND OTHER TALES FROM A ROCK 'N' ROLL LIFE*, FEATURING HIS ENCOUNTERS WITH LENNON, BOB DYLAN, BRUCE SPRINGSTEEN, JOHNNY CASH AND U2. HERE'S WHAT HE'S LISTENING TO AND LOVING.

Elvis Presley *Elvis at Sun* [BMG]

Recorded with producer Sam Phillips at Sun Records before "Heartbreak Hotel," these tracks largely defined rock 'n' roll—from the country-and-blues fusion to the youthful abandon and sensual authority.

Fred Neil *The Many Sides of Fred Neil* [COLLECTOR'S CHOICE]

If ever you feel the pace of life is getting too hectic, sit down with these peaceful recordings by an overlooked talent from the 1960s folk scene.

The Flying Burrito Brothers *The Gilded Palace of Sin* [EDSEL U.K.-IMPORT]

Gram Parsons helped birth country-rock with this late-'60s album, hanging onto traditional sounds during a time of rapidly shifting values.

John Prine *John Prine* [ATLANTIC]

A classic singer/songwriter collection from the early '70s, filled with heartfelt stories about extraordinary moments in ordinary lives. Even after all this time, I can recite the lyrics to every song. Conor Oberst fans, especially, should love it.

Various artists *The Harder They Come* soundtrack [ISLAND]

A wonderfully engaging 1970s reggae collection that blends striking social commentary with irresistible rhythms. Jimmy Cliff stars.

MIXED media

THE BAND THAT FEEDS MONTANA

MISSOULA FOODIES COOK AND ROCK IN EQUAL MEASURE

Volumen's best road stories are edible. Whenever the Montana five-piece crashed on a stranger's floor, the musicians would Iron Chef the fridge and cook up Monte Cristos, 20 different French-fry dipping sauces, or what became known as The Heartstopper: ground beef and cheddar rolled in mashed potatoes and breadcrumbs, beer-battered and deep-fried. In the van, drummer Bob Marshall and singer/guitarist Doug Smith—both culinary-school grads—would torture everyone with foodie fantasies. "They'd bounce off recipes," says singer/guitarist Shane Hickey, "to the point where we were salivating."

Formed 10 years ago to play a track-for-track live cover of David Bowie's *Ziggy Stardust and the Spiders from Mars*, Volumen has just self-released *Skipper of Reverses*, its fourth full album of nerdy, propulsive sci-fi New Wave—think Stiff Records meets Oingo Boingo, with a test tube full of Weezer and a microgram of *Star Wars* (one song on the new record is called "Bowie2D2"). "Good or bad, nobody's saying, 'Yeah, it's kind of the same thing over and over again,'" says Hickey, whose younger brother Bryan plays bass in the band, along with aptly named keyboardist Chris Bacon. "We've always said it has to be fun, all of the time, with no expectation that anything's gonna come out of it."

Today, Volumen's music is beloved in Missoula's rock clubs, and its food is adored by the entire town. Smith used to cook and teach at a natural supermarket, and is now a wine consultant working on his sommelier certification. Bryan Hickey manages local institution Big Dipper Ice Cream, known for such flavors as mango habanero, cardamom and cold smoke, the latter made with beer from the nearby Kettlehouse microbrewery. And Marshall has been named best chef by alt-weekly *Missoula Independent* for all three years that his Biga Pizza has been open. He highlights local, seasonal ingredients and unexpected flavor combinations, like housemade sausage with Flathead cherry chutney and smoked gouda, or local bacon, caramelized sweet potatoes, toasted hazelnuts, mozzarella and maple-chipotle drizzle. When the band plays on a Friday night, he'll leave the club at 2 a.m. to mix up the next morning's pizza dough.

"There is an exact correlation between how Bob makes pizza and how we make music," Shane Hickey says. "We're making music for ourselves, stuff that we would be into. And he makes pizza that he likes, and thinks that the rest of us would be into."

Which begs the Barbara Walters-style question: If Volumen were a pizza...?

"It would be one that sounded strange, but once you had it, it would be your favorite," Marshall says. "Maybe something like broiled hominy, shaved napa cabbage, braised kosher beef, pickled beets and crème fraiche. Actually sounds delicious!" **JASON COHEN**

Photo by Roger Parchen

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SECOND? THIRD? FOURTH TIMES A CHARM?

A LOOK AT THIS YEAR'S MOST-ANTICIPATED MOVIE SEQUELS

BY CHRISTINA LEE

1 *WALL STREET 2: MONEY NEVER SLEEPS* (APRIL 23)
With his natty suits, slicked-back hair and Master of the Universe persona, Michael Douglas personified '80s excess in Oliver Stone's classic *Wall Street*. How times change: The sequel picks up just before the 2008 financial-industry bailout. Because Stone dares to reinterpret "no nobility in poverty," we eagerly await what he has to say, with or without Charlie Sheen.

2 *IRON MAN 2* (MAY 7)
Tony Stark may have emerged from his prison in a suit of armor, but that tough exterior hid a newfound vulnerability. The role resurrected Robert Downey Jr.'s career, and the sequel—with nemeses including Scarlett Johansson as the Black Widow and Mickey Rourke as Whiplash—will catapult us into theaters again.

3 *SHREK FOREVER AFTER* (MAY 21)
Shrek first won our hearts in 2001, setting a slightly racy precedent for the PG rating thereafter. In its fourth chapter, Dreamworks challenges us to imagine a world without our favorite snot-colored couple, when Shrek wishes for the bachelor-ogre life he had before he met Fiona—and then gets it.

4 *TOY STORY 3* (JUNE 18)
Before *Toy Story*, we never thought our of Slinky as loyal, nor our Mr. Potato Head as a wisecracker. But a face-off between cowboy and astronaut for one boy's affection forever changed our perception of toys. Watching them come back to life nearly 15 years later will surely be a nostalgic experience, much like poking through that ol' toy box again.

Photo by Dane Sponberg / SCAD Visual Media

BUSTIN' WITH AUGUSTEN

BY GRAY CHAPMAN

Augusten Burroughs overshares. For almost a decade, the author has plundered his personal life to spit out three memoirs (one, *Running with Scissors*, was adapted as a film in 2006) and three collections of personal stories, in addition to a novel. "I love preservation," he tells *Paste*. "Writing is the preservation of a memory." Burroughs' latest offering is *You Better Not Cry*, a wry, quick-witted essay collection revolving around Christmas. On the heels of the book's release, Burroughs sat down with *Paste* in an antebellum mansion in midtown Atlanta—a rather unusual backdrop for the boyish, graphic-tee sporting Manhattanite. Speaking in breathless run-on sentences and chugging Diet Coke by the canful, the over-caffeinated author shared his perspectives on truth, fiction and the recent psychiactric diagnosis that explains *everything*.

PASTE: What made you decide to write a Christmas book?

AUGUSTEN BURROUGHS: Christmas—I've always been obsessed with it. I've always loved it. And I think the reason is, I'm like a goat. I stamp my foot at the shiny can. It's 'cause I like the shiny shit. Every Christmas I've ever had has sucked. Now maybe there have been one or two that didn't, but I don't remember them, because most of them have been horrible. Horrible in one way or another. But at the same time, there's always been something that I didn't expect that was—what's the word? I have a vocabulary of like 12 words—"perfect" and "shiny" in the middle of it.

PASTE: How do you know whether you're crossing the line between non-fiction and fiction?

BURROUGHS: People have always asked me, and I've never had a good answer for it. They always want to know, "How can you know all of this is true?" and I've always been sort of like, "Well, of course it is. It just is." And I've never even paused to ask myself when I'm alone, "Are you sure it's all true?" I just know. So last year, my primary-care physician said to me, "I'd like you to see a psychiatrist." I've seen a number of psychiatrists and therapists over the years, but this guy sat me down and asked me questions that no one had ever asked me. The first thing he said was, "So, do the tags on the neck of your T-shirt bother you?" And I said, "Yeah!" and as I said it, I had a hole in the neck of my T-shirt where I'd ripped the tag out. They drive me crazy. Not the silky ones, but the crunchy Hanes Beefy Tees kind. Anyway, then he continued to ask me questions, and finally said, "Well, what I think you have has one name or 12 names or no names, depending on who you ask." He did give it a name, and I don't know what it is, but every time I'm talking about it, someone goes, "It's sensory blah blah!"

PASTE: It's sensory processing disorder.

BURROUGHS: Yes! It sounds like one of those bullshit diseases of the day, like Restless Leg Syndrome but without a commercial. So whatever it is, whether it's a thing or not, this guy has seen people who also share the same symptoms. One thing he says he sees is an expression in memory. People with this thing have memories that extend deep, deep into childhood, but very early. There exist these vivid memories from all periods of my life, and some go back very, very early.

PASTE: And does this help clarify the blurry line between nonfiction and memoir for you?

BURROUGHS: That's a completely different issue. I think you can do anything you want to do. If I wanted to write a memoir, and totally make everything up, I could do it. But I would not pretend that it's true; I don't know why you would do that. It doesn't make any sense to me. It's so simple. Do whatever you want to do. There are no rules. But just don't tell people that you did something else. I could imagine weaving some fiction into a memoir because it might be fanciful, or you have some great reason for doing it, but I certainly wouldn't make the entire thing fictional. If you decided to weave a tiny, miniature winged fairy into your childhood and make it seem real, I guess go ahead and do that. Be coy, be tongue-in-cheek about it, but for God's sake, don't tell people it's completely true.

PASTE: Is there any future of you writing about anyone else?

BURROUGHS: Like a biography? I've thought about it. But I think I'm too lazy. I'd really like to write a biography of the guy who wrote *A Confederacy of Dunces* [John Kennedy Toole]. That book really resonated. I related completely to so much in that book and could relate so deeply to that creature. I could see writing about him. But it's a horrible burden, too—I better fucking get every goddamn thing right in that book.

ONLINE To read *Paste*'s expanded interview with Burroughs, visit PasteMagazine.com/December09.

NIGHT ROUNDS

BY JENNA WOGINRICH ILLUSTRATION BY MEG HUNT

Feel however you want about earflaps, but I'm wearing them. Yes, I look ridiculous. But I'm not all that concerned about appearances. Mostly that's because there isn't a chance in hell I'm going to run into another person tonight, and also because it's so damn cold here in Vermont—the only way to keep the earbuds from freezing to my lobes is to shield them with my ugly hat. I pull it down over my head like a helmet, turn up the iPod, grab the lantern by the cabin door, and step into the dark. There's a farm to put to bed, and the ritual demands a soundtrack.

Tonight it's Iron and Wine. The night before was Bon Iver. The music matches the intensity of the task at hand. Night rounds are a calm, meditative, exercise—just making sure everyone with hooves has a safe place to sleep. The songs are soft—lullabies, really—but this isn't always the case. Breaking sod demands Radiohead. Mucking the sheep shed begs for Bill Monroe. Random playlists are unacceptable. I can't be caught throwing bales off the back of the truck and have Paul Simon suddenly break into a croon. I'd get nothing done.

I get lost in the music as I wade through the pasture. The calm voices of men with guitars steady my lantern hand. I sing along as I run through the checklist in my head: Who needs fresh water? Are all the gates shut? Are the chickens hiding any eggs under the straw in the corner of the coop? I make the rounds and try to juggle my concerns for the animals with careful consideration of the lyrics. Between verses of "The Trapeze Swinger," Sam Beam is interrupted by the occasional sheep crying for grain. I'm sure this mashup was never Sam's intention, but the combination can bring me to tears. I love this farm, and I need this music.

I come back inside the cabin, shed my layers and disengage the earflaps. The fireplace was blazing before I went out, and returning to it after an hour in the wind delivers a comfort known only to people with sheep shit on their shoes. This is usually the time to grab my guitar or sit down with my fiddle. But tonight I don't want to preach, I just want to go to church. So I opt instead for the old GE turntable.

I collect records. I have them stashed all over this little cabin. Vinyl is the musical vehicle of choice at this farm. I like the scratches, the raspy voices, the distinct hollowness. Records have teeth. And when you live like I do, you appreciate carnivory in your appliances. I love how my old suitcase player turns with the slightest off-kilter rotations, transforming into something else, a breathing animal. I place the needle on its vertebrae and slip away to cook dinner.

The fireplace was blazing before I went out, and returning to it after an hour in the wind delivers a comfort known only to people with sheep shit on their shoes.

The dogs understand that when the record player is on, it's time to be quiet. Together, we are eight paws and two wool socks. One dog pads up to me as I knead bread dough at the kitchen table. She sits beside me, leaning her weight into my thigh. The final chorus of "Hey Jude" roars over the fireplace, and I can't stop myself from smiling.

I understand that soundtracks are meant to be nostalgic, appreciated in retrospect. But the music on this farm is always in the present, another living thing. It trots alongside me in every action, from planting spring corn to table grace. Lyrics and old guitars sustain this place, and when the day is over, the music leans into me, too. The farm is safe, the dogs are in good spirits, the record player turns around three times and lies down.

↪ JENNA WOGINRICH BLOGS AT COLDANTLERFARM.BLOGSPOT.COM AND IS THE AUTHOR OF *MADE FROM SCRATCH.*

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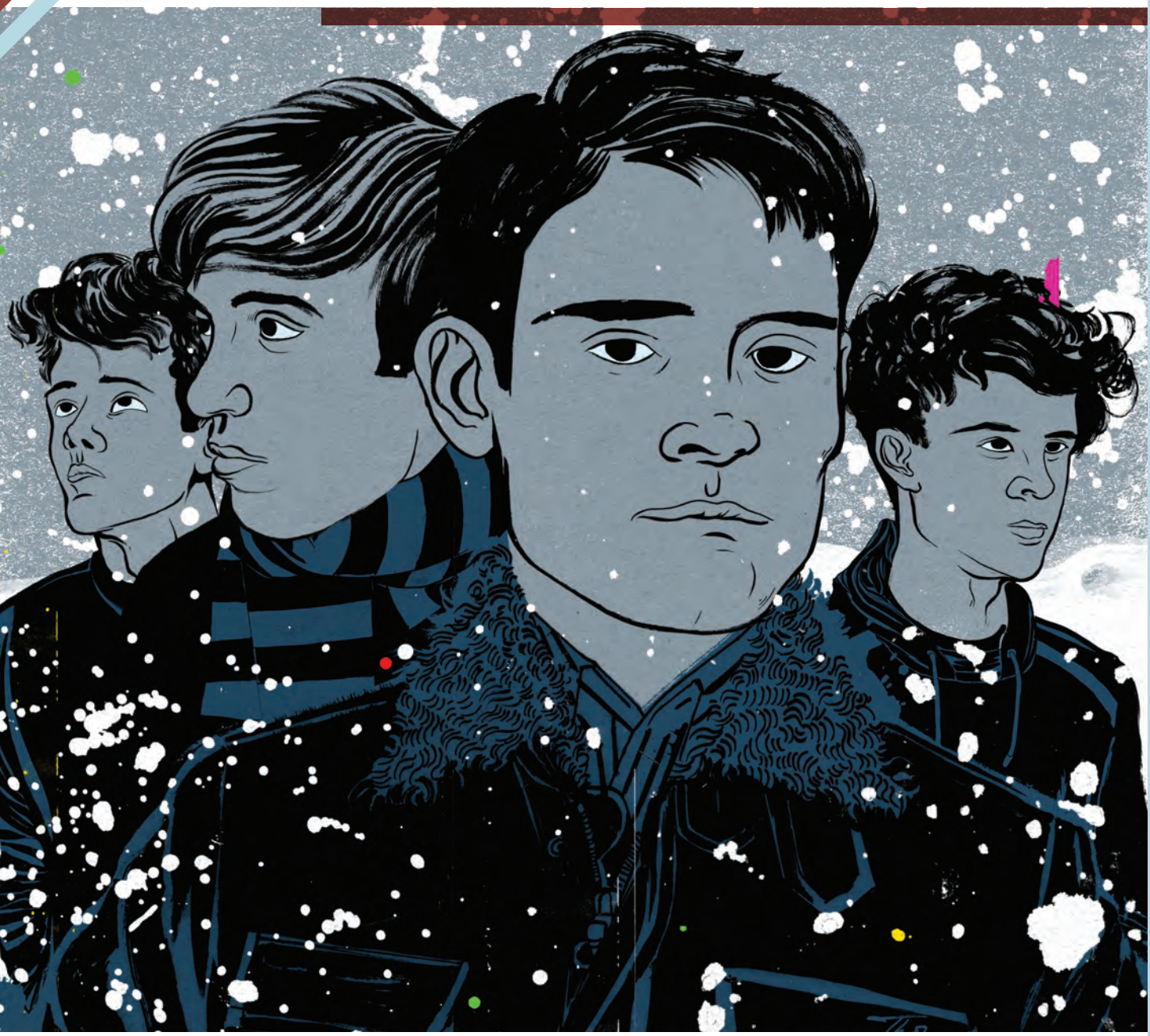
BAND

SEASONAL AFFECTIVE DISORDER

THE DRUMS RUN HOT AND COLD

BY JUSTIN JACOBS | ILLUSTRATION BY JACOB THOMAS



The Drums' lead singer Jonathan Pierce wanted to write a 1950s-style girl-group record, but Morrissey got in the way. "Having listened to The Smiths every day for the last 20 years, I just couldn't fully pull away," Pierce says. "As much as I tried, it's in my bones."

Out of that tussle came a new sound: The Drums' debut EP, *Summertime!*, plays like a Factory Records company beach party, with shiny doo-wop melodies overlaying Joy Division guitars. Pierce formed the band with childhood pal Jacob Graham last winter after escaping dreary Brooklyn for Kissimmee, Fla., where the endless summer pushed them to record 20 tracks embracing what he calls "simple, blatant pop music."

While *Summertime!* lives up to its title (lead single "Let's Go Surfing" is a catchy, whistle-looped call to action), The Drums' debut LP, coming in winter 2010, will showcase a more seasonally appropriate side of the band. "After the EP, what's left is gloomier, darker, more brooding songs," Pierce says. "I hope people don't expect hand claps, whistles and cartwheels."

THE DRUMS

HOMETOWN: Brooklyn **ALBUM:** *Summertime!* EP **MEMBERS:** : Jacob Graham (guitar), Connor Hanwick (drums), Adam Kessler (bass), Jonathan Pierce (vocals) **FOR FANS OF:** Joy Division, The Shangri-Las, Orange Juice

TV SHOW

FOOD PARTY APPETITE FOR CONSTRUCTION

When you or I run out of a crucial ingredient while cooking—say, baking soda or molasses—we're forced to abandon our kitchens and trek to the store. But when Thu Tran, the 28-year-old host of IFC's *Food Party* comes up short on a culinary item—say, a psychic potato covered in blinking eyes—her on-set colleagues simply rig one up out of cloth, coat hangers, duct tape and dowels. Digestable? Unlikely. Delightful? Absolutely.

Food Party's DIY-mania and anthropomorphized tubers should hit the spot for gastronomes and fans of surrealist puppetry alike. The unhinged technicolor kitchen space—its *mise en place* stocked with fantasy potions, apples from a "dealer" and a giant blue cave duck—would confound a live audience or anyone accustomed to following along at home. But Tran, whose cracked-out cookery gained popularity on YouTube before being adapted as a 10-minute television series, says she still tries to emulate some classic culinary icons. "When I did start out, I did look to Martha Stewart and Julia Child quite a bit, just in terms of how comfortable they were," she says. "When I'm doing the show, I'm just trying to be as close to myself as I can. I'm not playing a character. I'm just talking in a louder volume than I normally do."

A scene in season one—during which she births a kitten pie—confirms this confidence (and her volume). Tran, who majored in glasswork at the Cleveland Institute of Art and now spends her off-camera time handling props on tour with Girl Talk, has every reason to be self-assured in her bizarre boldness. Many of her art-school classmates—including puppet designer Daniel Baxter—moved to New York City and helped launch the idiosyncratic show's first season, and a second season is now in the works with IFC. "It's like working with 10 of your best friends," Tran says, noting that ideas for new characters are continually swapped and built upon, even in the middle of filming. "Someone will say, 'That might be wild if that thing was talking and had eight arms.' And Daniel will say, 'Give me 10 minutes.'" **REBECCA BOWEN**

FOOD PARTY
HOMETOWN: Cleveland, Ohio and Brooklyn
SHOW: *Food Party*
FOR FANS OF: *Pee-wee's Playhouse, Wonder Showzen, Top Chef*

Photo by Jennifer Graylock/IFC

SONGWRITER

LISSIE DISHES UP SOMETHING DELICIOUS

Two years ago, Lissie Maurus moved from Rock Island, Ill., to Los Angeles, then escaped L.A. for nearby Ojai. She lives there with her Lhasa Apso, Byron, in a little bungalow where she writes songs and plays house. "I've been being super domestic and making pies and cooking a ton," says the cornsilk-haired 27-year-old, who performs under her first name. When she saw signs for a recent chili cook-off in town, she thought, "You know, I might as well enter that," and then spent weeks rigorously testing her recipe. "I would take chili to the grocery store and have the guys at the butcher shop taste it and tell me what was missing," she says. "Like, 'It needs more garlic. It needs more spice.'"

That's pretty much how Lissie approaches music, too—headlong and with a little help from her friends. She started playing in Rock Island coffeehouses as a teenager and later gave college a try, but writing songs had her snared. Then, through an ex-boyfriend, she met Band of Horses bassist Bill Reynolds. At home in Ojai, in London with Ed Harcourt and with some of Reynolds' bandmates in Asheville, N.C., the pair recorded her first EP, *Why You Runnin'*, released in November. The five tracks revel in pure, countrified sorrow, with Lissie's glorious voice steeped in whiskey and reverb on raucous lead single "Little Lovin'" and plaintive hometown ballad "Oh Mississippi"—a haunting glimpse at what's in store for her full-length debut, coming in 2010.

LISSIE
HOMETOWN: Rock Island, Ill.
ALBUM: *Why You Runnin'* EP
FOR FANS OF: Emmylou Harris, Neko Case, Band of Horses

Her maiden chili-cook-off attempt fared less well (she didn't even place, and suspects local nepotism) though she stuck with a tried-and-true formula. "You start with something kind of basic that's an expression of yourself," she says. "And it's the little, tiny accents that make it really good." **RACHAEL MADDUX**

Photo by Emen Spencer

Photo by Rachel Leah Wollansky

DON'T FEAR THE **FREE ENERGY**

Free Energy's debut album, *Stuck On Nothing*, starts with a cowbell, but really gets going when the good-time electric guitars launch into an extended harmonized solo. "We're breaking out this time," Paul Sprangers sings on the opening track. "Making out with the wind."

Roll over, Leadbelly. Here comes America's new folk music. "I don't know what else is," says Scott Wells, the quintet's guitarist. "I think our national folk music is different types of pop music and probably the most perennially successful [pop] music is classic rock. It's something everyone has in common. Even if you don't like the music, you know it."

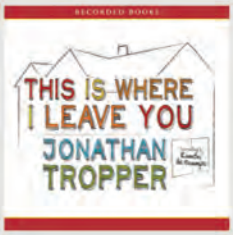
Wells and Sprangers hail from tiny Red Wing, Minn., on the banks of the mighty Mississippi. They cut their musical teeth in Minneapolis before moving to Philadelphia, where they formed the band. It's an appropriately blue-collar history for a group whose fist-pumping rock anthems induce visions of tie-dye and jean vests, beer in red plastic cups, and a general sense of some really memorable Friday night in suburban U.S.A. circa 1976. "We're trying to make dance music—fun party rock," Wells says, "stuff that's unabashedly going for it, with a good beat, good groove and hopefully a catchy hook."

FREE ENERGY

HOMETOWN: Philadelphia
ALBUM: *Stuck On Nothing*
BAND MEMBERS: Geoff Bucknum (guitar), Nicholas Shuminsky (drums), Paul Sprangers (vocals), Evan Wells (bass), Scott Wells (guitar)
FOR FANS OF: Tom Petty, Thin Lizzy, The Hold Steady

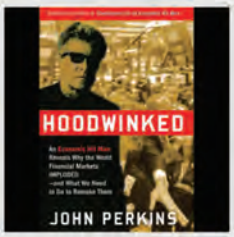
It's true that dance music has evolved since the end of the Vietnam War. But if you play "Bang Pop," with its primal, pounding drums, high-neck guitar interludes and "oh-oh" harmony breakdown, you just might be inclined to shake a flared denim-clad leg, too. Free Engery wears its influences like a low-cut V-neck—thus the cowbell that kicks off the record. "I think a cowbell in rock 'n' roll—it tells you right away it's time to party," Wells says. "Hopefully." **RICHARD PARKS**

PASTE
RECOMMENDS
@ AUDIBLE.COM

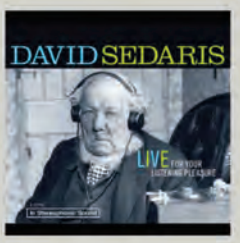


This Is Where I Leave You
by Jonathan Tropper
Narrated by Ramon de Ocampo

Chronic City
by Jonathan Lethem
Narrated by Mark Deakins



Hoodwinked
by John Perkins
Narrated by David Ackroyd



David Sedaris: Live for Your Listening Pleasure
by David Sedaris
Narrated by David Sedaris

Scroogenomics: Why You Shouldn't Buy Presents for the Holidays
by Joel Waldfogel
Narrated by Lloyd James

audible.com

PROMOTIONAL

THE SOFT PACK
NEW NAME, SAME BUZZ

In college, Soft Pack frontman Matt Lamkin had a film professor whose father was a Holocaust survivor. The band took its original name, The Muslims, from that professor's stories. "He was talking about how there were people [during the Holocaust] who were trying to get out," Lamkin says, "and people who had given up—the walking dead, so to speak, just waiting around to die. They were referred to as 'Muslims.'"

The band eventually grew tired of the unintended controversy, so it dropped the name. "Muslims thought we were making a joke and were offended, and with non-Muslims, it opened up this jokey thing where they thought they could make fun of Islam, and we weren't into that."

Half of the now-L.A.-based Soft Pack met in high school in San Diego, its current lineup solidifying in 2008. Since then, the band's raw, energetic rock—punky but not punk, noisy but not experimental, catchy but not pop—has landed it gigs opening for Franz Ferdinand, The Breeders and Phoenix. "Playing with bigger bands has always been a good experience," Lamkin says. "They've all been professionals on and off stage—very generous and friendly, a pleasure to see live and really good with jokes after the shows. So we learn little tricks of the trade—and that it pays to be good people."

THE SOFT PACK
HOMETOWN: San Diego
ALBUM: *The Soft Pack*
MEMBERS: Brian Hill (drums), Matt Lamkin (vocals, guitar), Dave Lantzman (bass), Matty McLoughlin (guitar)
FOR FANS OF: Black Lips, The Libertines, The Replacements

After releasing a few 7-inches and EPs, the band has signed to Kemado for its debut full-length, produced by Eli Janney (Ryan Adams, Jawbox, The Rapture) and due out in February. "It's a lot more dynamic than the old stuff," Lamkin says. "There's more push and pull. I think we're getting better as a band, and as songwriters." **STEVE LABATE**

ACE TEAM
FROM ZERO TO *ZENO*

Chilean game studio ACE Team may seem like an unlikely champion of indie game development, but the small Santiago-based company has earned a solid reputation as creator of 2009 indie hit *Zeno Clash*, a tooth-and-nails brawler that combines an innovative melee combat system with Hieronymous Bosch-style art and a steampunk-pastiche storyline.

The brainchild of brothers Andrés, Carlos and Edmundo Bordeu, the studio initially began as little more than a casual creator of *Doom 2* modifications. But then a series of lucky breaks snagged it a license for vaunted game developer Valve's elusive Source engine system—a move that also landed *Zeno Clash* a healthy deal through Steam, the world's largest online video-game-distribution system. Since then, ACE Team has grown in size to eight core team members and is currently developing a sequel to *Zeno Clash* and putting the finishing touches on *Zeno Clash: Ultimate Edition*, an upgraded version of the game slated for a 2010 release on Xbox Live Arcade.

Studio co-founder Carlos Bordeu hopes the success of *Zeno Clash* will serve as a rallying cry for indie developers struggling for a share of the cutthroat gaming market. "With the rise of digital distribution," he says, "today, independent game developers have a better chance of succeeding in the industry than they have had in many years [...] and there's no reason to think that this won't continue to happen in upcoming years."

ACE TEAM
HOMETOWN: Santiago, Chile
GAME: *Zeno Clash: Ultimate Edition*
FOR FANS OF: *Portal, Final Fantasy, Mirror's Edge*

Bordeu is also quick to offer advice to indie game developers looking to make their mark. "Don't reinvent the wheel," he says. "You can always aim high in your game design. If you are creative, you can certainly do a lot with less resources. All the successful indie game developers shine because they make things that the big game-development studios wouldn't risk doing." **ADAM VOLK**

Zeno Clash still courtesy of ACE Team

PASTE RECOMMENDS @ AUDIBLE.COM

The Humbling
by Philip Roth
Narrated by Dick Hill

Let The Great World Spin
by Norman Ollestad
Narrated by Patricia Floyd Sorenson,

The Road
by Cormac McCarthy
Narrated by Tom Stechschulte

Slackonomics: Generation X in the Age of Creative Destruction
by Lisa Chamberlain
Narrated by Roxanne Hernandez

You Better Not Cry: Stories for Christmas
by Augusten Burroughs
Narrated by Augusten Burroughs

audible.com

PROMOTIONAL

lifeStyle

YOU SAY YOU WANT A RESOLUTION?

10 WAYS TO BE BETTER IN 2010

Listen to music the way it should be heard.
Little Horn Speakers
$1500 specimenproducts.com

Keep warm without warming the globe
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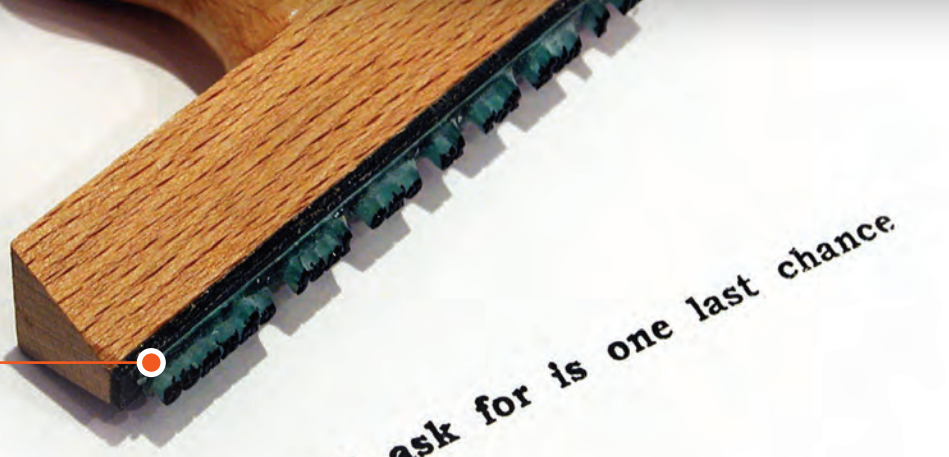
$229 merrell.com

Make cupcakes the size of bowling balls
Dimensions Giant Cupcake Pan
$31 wilton.com

Organize your life **Pentagram 2010 Typographic Calendar**
$26-$44 pentagram.com



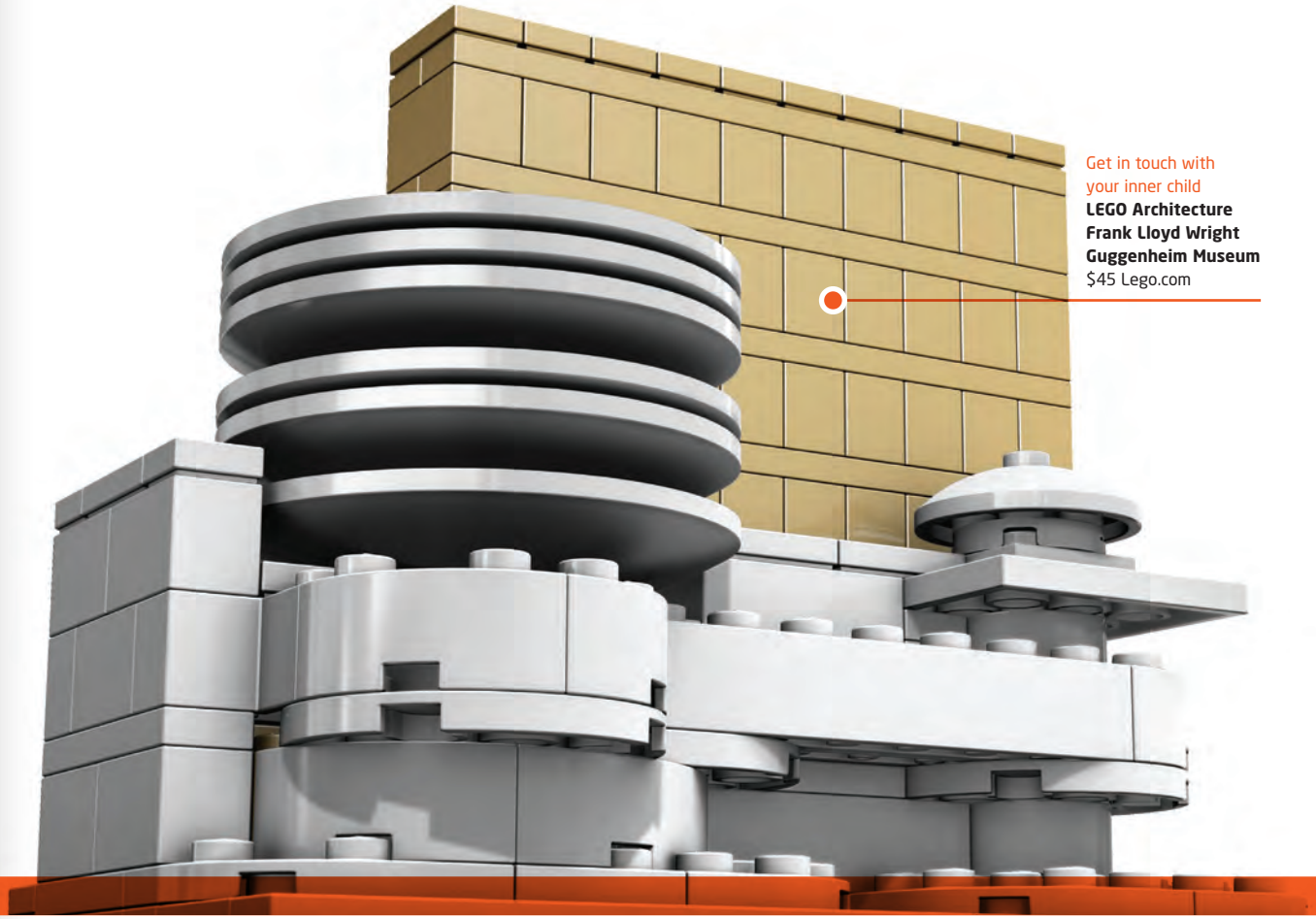
Tell the truth
Honesty Stamps
by Dominic Wilcox
$25 thorstenvanelten.com

Expand your palate
Mo's Bacon Chocolate Chip Pancake Mix $12
vosgeschocolate.com

Stop killing plants
Vitamin Living's IV Planter
$375 aplusrstore.com

Be punctual
Splat Green Bamboo Modern Wall Clock
$45 pilotdesign.etsy.com

Reacquaint yourself with film
Diana F+CMYK
$105 lomography.com



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LEGO Architecture Frank Lloyd Wright Guggenheim Museum
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PASTE AT AUSTIN CITY LIMITS

IN OCTOBER, *PASTE* JOURNEYED TO TEXAS FOR THE ANNUAL AUSTIN CITY LIMITS FESTIVAL. JOINED BY OUR FRIENDS AT SWEET LEAF TEA, WE HOSTED A BACKSTAGE TENT FOR ARTISTS TO HAVE PORTRAITS TAKEN BY PHOTOGRAPHER JEFF FASANO, BE INTERVIEWED BY *PASTE* AND ENJOY A DRINK. TITO'S VODKA MIXED *VERY* WELL WITH THAT SWEET LEAF TEA.

Phoenix

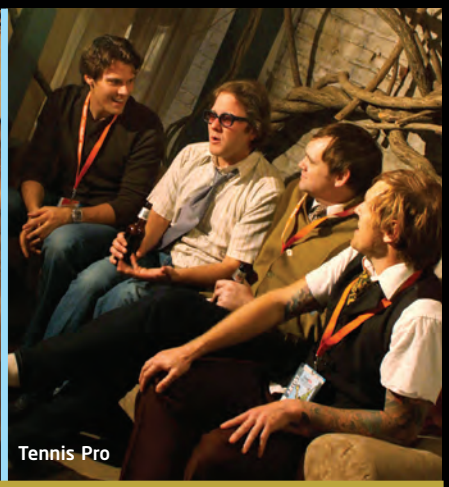
Dell Sound & The Jury Winner
The Bright Light Social Hour

The Low Anthem

PASTE AT CMJ MUSIC MARATHON

LATER IN THE MONTH, *PASTE* HIT NYC FOR THE CMJ MUSIC MARATHON. WE JOINED WITH CMJ AND PUREVOLUME TO HOST THE ARTISTS' LOUNGE, WHERE BANDS CAME TO ENJOY DRINKS AND HANG OUT DURING THE DAY. THEN, AT 4 PM FOR FOUR DAYS STRAIGHT, *PASTE* HOSTED HAPPY HOURS AT THE LIVING ROOM WITH FOUR PERFORMANCES EACH DAY, FEATURING DRINKS SUPPLIED BY IZZE, MAGIC HAT AND MALIBU RUM. OUR PALS ALSO NOSHED ON SNACKS FROM LESSER EVIL.

Andrew Belle



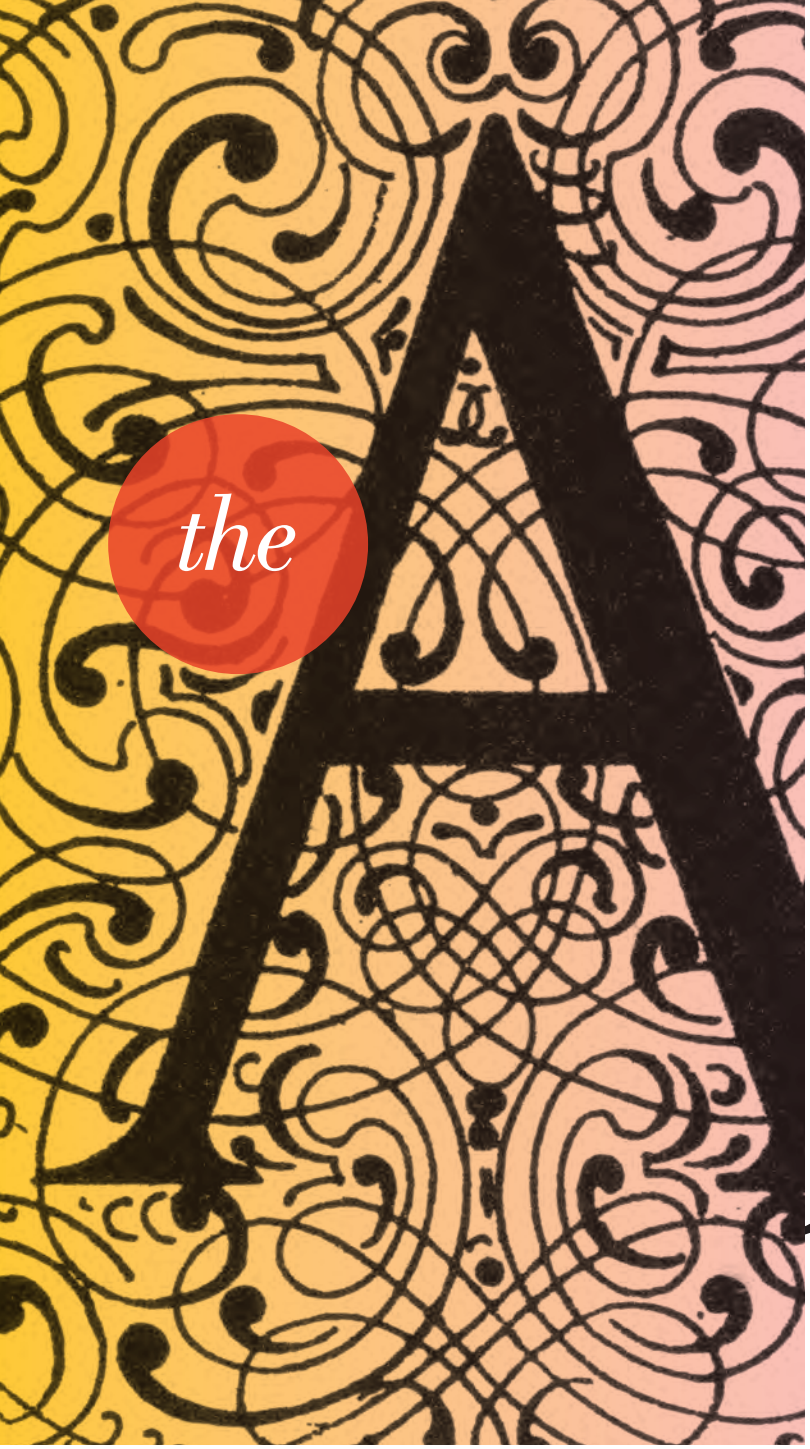
Tennis Pro

P.J. Walkley

PROMOTIONAL

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

10 REASONS WE ALREADY LOVE 2010



the Artful Dodgers

SANTIGOLD & VAMPIRE WEEKEND

THEY SIDESTEPPED CONVENTION WITH GENRE-JUMPING DEBUT ALBUMS. SO WHAT NOW?

BY NICK MARINO

PHOTOGRAPHY BY PIER NICOLA D'AMICO

HE'S A BOY AND SHE'S A GIRL. HE'S WHITE, SHE'S BLACK. TALL, PETITE. CEREBRAL, BUBBLY. HEY, WE COULD DO THIS ALL DAY!

Much more interesting, though, is how much Vampire Weekend frontman Ezra Koenig and Santigold mastermind Santi White have in common—their shared fascination, for example, with the rhythms of the African diaspora. Their love for spiky melodies. Even their upbringing. Koenig, 25, and White, 33, took their Northeastern childhoods as opportunities to explore the full gamut of culture. They got enough of New York and Philadelphia to acquire an effortless urbanity, and enough of the suburbs to explore the various all-American high-school subcultures. Koenig devoured his parents' record collection ("My mom had lots of classical music and folk, and my dad had lots of blues, but he also really had all the best new music up until 1984, which is the year I was born") while White alternated between skater culture and hood chic, rocking out to both Nirvana and The Pharcyde. White and Koenig both eventually went to brainy universities, then wound up in NYC and made two of 2008's most original records—records that treat music as a post-racial, post-genre art form. "Nobody in our band," Koenig says, "and nobody I think almost anywhere, really reflects just plain-old rock 'n' roll anymore." Certainly he and White do not. Their music toys with musical orthodoxy, scrambling punk aggression, Jamaican mellowness, literary sophistication and hip-hop cool until the distinctions become complementary.

Today both artists are here in a Manhattan photo studio, dressed in Dickensian attire for our Great Expectations issue covershoot. It ain't just a clever literary conceit: Anticipation is frothy for Vampire Weekend's sophomore disc (*Contra*, due out in January) and for Santigold's second album, which will come out, uh, she's not really sure. "I think the label thinks I will have a record *out* in 2010," White says, squirreled away in a back room with a smoothie. "*Maybe* that will happen. If I don't have a record out, I'll have *something* out in 2010."

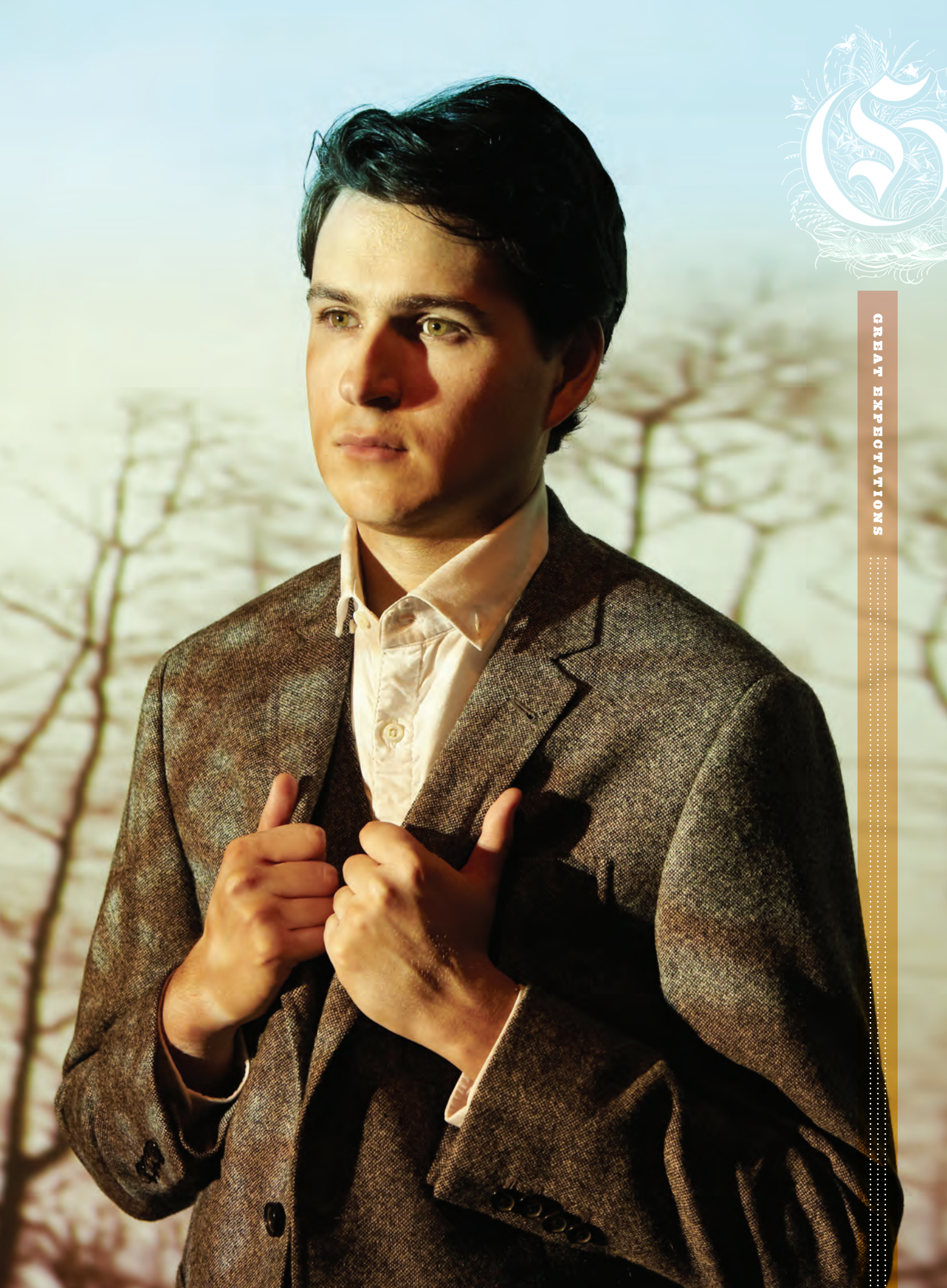
For a pair of arty, unconventional musicians, Koenig and White both enjoyed surprising success the first time around. Santigold opened for Coldplay just three months after releasing her self-titled debut album. And only five months after dropping their own self-titled debut, Koenig and his college buddies in Vampire Weekend performed their single "Oxford Comma" before some 40,000 people at the Glastonbury festival. "That's a song that we played at our very first show," Koenig says, "which was in the basement at Columbia for this battle of the bands. And the contrast couldn't have been more extreme. That felt like entering a whole different world. But then after doing festivals all summer, we got used to it."

first meet Koenig before the photo shoot on a glorious New York City morning. The air outside carries an invigorating autumnal nip. We're upstairs in a cavernous space above the Meatpacking District; there's yogurt on a catering table, granola, *The New York Times*. Music plays, various assistants scurry. Koenig is wearing a blue work shirt, dark jeans and high-top Nikes. He has floppy hair, arched eyebrows, long limbs and apple cheeks. He resembles a young, lanky Dan Aykroyd.

We find a quiet place to talk, a lounge done up like a hipster hunting lodge: hardwood floors, brick walls, a chess set, a Newcastle tap, a rack of antlers. Koenig sits on a tufted leather couch and fields my questions with unusual care. He's a thinker. At least once, he rests his elbow on his knee and his head on his fist, as though sculpted by Rodin.

"I definitely expected a lot less than actually happened," he says. We're discussing *Vampire Weekend*, a record of melodic curlicues and sinewy grooves, a 21st-century indie-rock disc indebted to the analog textures of Afro-pop. "I think we had very modest goals," he adds. Like quitting their day jobs, and maybe one day—if they were lucky—playing The Bowery Ballroom, a New York venue with a capacity of less than 600. As it turned out, "We played Bowery Ballroom two nights in a row for our album-release party. So I guess the day the album came out, I basically had achieved one of my major goals."

If Koenig hadn't envisioned success, Kris Chen had. Chen, the senior vice president of A&R for XL Recordings, is the talent



GREAT EXPECTATIONS

I'VE BEEN SHOCKED WHEN PEOPLE HAVE DESCRIBED US AS BEING THESE WASPY DUDES, AND PEOPLE EVEN DESCRIBE MY NAME AS WASPY, WHICH IS ENDLESSLY HILARIOUS TO MY PARENTS, WHO ARE NEW YORK CITY JEWS.

scout who signed Sigur Rós and Thom Yorke to the label—and also the man who snatched up Vampire Weekend after discovering the band on MySpace. "I loved it," Chen says, "but when I really thought about the band and looked at them I just thought, 'I think *a lot* of people could like this.'" And a lot of people did. *Vampire Weekend* sold 476,000 copies Stateside and almost a million worldwide.

Which brings us to *Contra*. "I knew that if we made an album that sounded very similar to the first album, it would 100-percent be the same but worse," Koenig says. Then again, "I thought another goal of ours had to be to not abandon the first album, 'cause I thought that would've been equally pathetic, to pretend that now we're a dubstep band or to pretend that, 'Oh, that music that we listened to then—that was like a trend, we're not interested in that anymore.' I thought that would've been totally dishonest."

The trick, in other words, was to sound like Vampire Weekend but not *Vampire Weekend*. If everyone thought the first record resembled Paul Simon's *Graceland*, then the new one is more like *The Rhythm of the Saints* as played by The Specials and produced by Yo-Yo Ma.

The retooling process started with percussion. After recording the drums on their first album in a friend's Brooklyn basement beneath the F train, the band wanted beefier rhythms. So for *Contra*, they spent two days at Avatar Studios—where "Like A Virgin" was recorded—focusing exclusively on drums. Keyboardist and producer Rostam Batmanglij also laid down a metric ton of synthesized beats, and Brazilian percussionist Mauro Refosco chipped in with marimbas, rebolo and zabumba. As a result, the new tempos and textures vary wildly. The halting, six-minute "Diplomat's Son," which samples scatting vocals from Sri Lankan rapper M.I.A., chugs along with an arrhythmic heartbeat. The drums on "Giving Up The Gun" sound like sneakers banging around in a clothes dryer. "Cousins" feels like an attempt to set the record for world's fastest ska tune. "California English," another breakneck sprint, is so fast that on early mixes drummer Christopher Tomson could be heard panting.

Other tracks take different musical risks. Six songs, for instance, feature the cello. "I Think Ur A Contra" employs a few licks of acoustic guitar, a Vampire Weekend first. Lead single "Horchata" has no guitar at all. "Taxi Cab" has almost no drums *or* guitar—it's driven by Batmanglij's piano scales, and by Nat Baldwin, of avant-pop band Dirty Projectors, playing a double bass drenched in harmonics. I tell Koenig that Baldwin's bass sounds a lot like DJ scratching. "I kept saying to Rostam, 'We're gonna have at least one song with DJ scratching on this album,' and it didn't happen," Koenig says. "I forgot about it actually ... on the next album, I swear, there's gonna be some."

The biggest risk of all, though, is one thing the band didn't change—and, really, *couldn't* change: its obsession with prep culture, which spills into its album art, song titles and stage clothes. The band members dress in such absurdly blue-blooded threads—argyles, cardigans, blazers, topsiders—that you wonder whether they're subverting a stereotype or just submitting to it. "I know sometimes the way we dress is gonna send some people into hysterics," Koenig says. "It almost seems like, 'Well, that makes it more worth doing.' But basically I think one thing people fundamentally don't understand about our band is that the four of us, we represent a lot of backgrounds and perspectives, and it's certainly not as simple as people make it out to be. I've been shocked when people have described us as being these WASPy dudes, and people even describe my name as WASPy, which is endlessly hilarious to my parents, who are New York City Jews. My family is Eastern European, working-class New York City Jewish. Rostam's parents are from Iran; he's Persian. And we're like the two main songwriters in the band. The other guys, still, their backgrounds are not WASPy either. It's always kind of cracked me up that people would find it so easy to try and culturally, economically, educationally pigeonhole us, especially when our names are, like, Ezra and Rostam."

On *Contra*, Koenig sings about "good schools and friends with pools" in the wry tones of an Ivy Leaguer, just as he sang knowingly about Hyannis Port on his band's first outing. Everything about Vampire Weekend still has the immaculate pitch of Whit Stillman's *Metropolitan*, a film about debutantes and aristocrats swanning around Manhattan, simultaneously knowing everything and nothing. "I don't like the idea of straight-up satire," Koenig says. "But I think that to talk about class and privilege and money is probably one of *the* most important things you could talk about in a song. And we're just trying to do it in a way that's interesting and that has layers of meaning. I think maybe as our body of work grows, that aspect of our body of work will become clearer. It's not that we're trying to fuck with people by putting a girl with a Polo shirt on the cover. It's almost like we can't help it. That's what we're interested in."

Heading into the 2008 Olympics, advertising executive Gabe McDonough had a problem: He needed one musician to soundtrack two very different television spots. His client, Anheuser-Busch, was set to launch a massive ad campaign for a new beverage called Bud Light Lime. Commercials would air constantly during the Games, and they would come in two forms—a head-turning 15-second teaser to introduce the beer, and a mellow 30-second ad with a beach-party vibe. "I needed an artist that could do basically two different things really well," McDonough tells me via phone from his office in Chicago. "They could do something that was really banging and clanging and really catching people's attention, and they could also do something that was really smooth and chilled out and summery and poppy."

He chose Santigold—at the time, a relatively unknown artist who had cut her teeth as a young A&R executive, and whose debut album was startlingly eclectic. The disc included the buzzing rock track "You'll Find A Way," the coquettish "I'm A Lady" and the tough-talking "Shove It," and its cover displayed a black-and-lavender picture of White vomiting a cloud of gold glitter. McDonough, who had previously worked for adventurous record label Thrill Jockey, settled on two songs that fit his purposes: sun-kissed pop tune "Lights Out," and rugged hip-hop track "Creator," with its self-empowering chorus: "Me, I'm a creator / Thrill is to make it up / The rules I break got me a place up on the radar."

No stranger to ad campaigns, Anheuser-Busch now considers Bud Light Lime one of the most successful product launches in company history. The campaign also brought two sides of Santigold into millions of American households, a boon for a new artist with so many creative dimensions. "That's really one of Santi's strengths," McDonough says. "That record is all over the place. I'm sure she could write a speed-metal song if she had to, and do it really well."

She'd probably love the opportunity. Before forming Santigold, a collaboration with songwriter/producer John Hill, she fronted the rock band Stiffed. A day before our covershoot, she flew in from Los Angeles where she was producing New Wave pioneers Devo.

"It was amazing," White gushes. "They're just, like, my band idols. Them and The Smiths. But Devo, I made them pull out the red hats and pose for a picture." She giggles. She's slender and girlish, a style maven who showed up this morning in a powder-blue jacket, a ski cap and shades. She's had a long 24 hours. Today, the photo shoot. Yesterday, the transcontinental plane ride. And late last night, she dropped by Hell's Kitchen nightclub Terminal 5 to perform a song with reggae duo Major Lazer. "I am starting my new record right now," she says, "and I'm really excited about it because I've been on the road for three years—literally, three years—and it's been a lot."

Yes, it has. In addition to the Bud campaign and Coldplay tour, Santigold landed slots at Lollapalooza and Bonnaroo, released a killer mixtape, filmed a voter-registration public-service announcement, remixed Norah Jones and collaborated with hip-hop kingpin Jay-Z.

"I haven't sold a tremendous amount of records," White says. "I haven't really hugely broken through on radio. And I'm definitely not a household name. But this record did way more than anyone thought it would do. I didn't even think anybody in the States would like this record. There was no music out like it, and it was during a time when you had to kind of fit in. Nobody was really checking for genre-less music. Certainly didn't think all the different types of people would like it. Like, I was shocked that it was really so well-accepted in the whole hip-hop world. [And] I was really excited that people like Björk and David Byrne liked it."

Byrne liked it so much, in fact, that he invited White to sing on his *Here Lies Love* project, a rumination on Imelda Marcos. Byrne gave her a track, "and she nailed it immediately," he says. "It's my daughter's favorite of that project. At that time, when she was in the studio, Santi was still figuring out the live thing—but when I saw her set at Bonnaroo this year I thought, 'Well, she got *that* figured out.'"

White seems to have a lot of things figured out. She glides across demographic borders with practiced ease, a skill she developed back home in Mount Airy, Pa. "It's part of Philadelphia proper," she says, "but it's still suburban-feeling. It's got grass and trees and quiet streets. And downtown was all the gold stores. And all the fly girls with the big gold earrings and the asymmetrical haircuts and the leather trench coats." She pauses dramatically. "And I was like, 'I wanna be like *that*!'" She bounced from a private all-girls school to a Philly public school, where she got to know nerds and skaters and even those supercool fly girls. "Anyway, so I got there and the whole fly-girl thing was just stupid, and I realized it—and I was like, 'Let me go back to private school.' So then I started dressing super preppy, kind of like Ezra." She laughs again; White is a big laugher. "That's when I started to just develop my own style. I was preppy for a minute, and then I was just like, 'I like *this* from over here and *this* from over here.' And that's when I started being like, 'OK, I'm gonna pick and choose now that I'm exposed to all this stuff.' And even my friends I started to pick and choose. I kept some of the friends from the fly girls. I kept some of the new friends. And it ended up being really cool because I realized that I like being the only person that could jump around the scene."

White kept jumping. She studied West African and Haitian drumming at Wesleyan University, rose through the record-label ranks, formed Stiffed and then blew up with Santigold. "I created a mold of figuring out what *my* sound is," she says of her first record, which sold more than 175,000 copies in the United States., according to Nielsen SoundScan. "I think that was a really big step, 'cause I didn't feel like any other sound fit me all the way. So now it's just like the evolution of all of that. I don't feel like I need to create a new mold. You know, like The Smiths, for example—or Devo! If you listen to all their records, you don't get a different band every record. It's

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not like Madonna. And I think that's the kind of artist I am. I wouldn't want to love a record from an artist, and then go buy the [next] record and have it be something completely different. I don't want it to be stagnant and be the *exact* same thing. But just an organic evolution of who that artist is."

In a way, she has an easier path to sophomore success than Koenig. When your whole brand is built around musical collage, after all, you can pull sounds from the entire sonic universe and still sound like yourself. And yet, like Vampire Weekend, White still gets hemmed in by musical stereotypes. "I meet people in airports, every time—you know, the security guys. 'Hey. Where you going? Do you live there? What do you do?' 'I'm a singer.' I don't even know why I even tell the truth. 'What do you sing, R&B?'" She laughs, on a roll now. "Or you meet any person, like *any* person. It's, 'Oh, what do you sing, gospel?' And it's just like, come on. So, it's just nice to be able to give another model for other women of color, or other women in general, other *people* in general."

All Santi White is doing, then, is making ambitious music outside the familiar confines of genre, without radio support, while trying to represent a whole new model of artistry. No wonder she needs a break. The new album is coming—just give her a second to catch her breath. "This will be a creative year for me," she says. "Last year was a work year for me."

At this point, White is excited to stay at home for a while. To celebrate her most recent birthday, she rented *Twilight* and got her nails done. She wants a puppy. The speed of life is already slowing. And yet, one gets the feeling she'll never quit jumping around. Near the end of our conversation, White tells me she's learning the martial art of wing chun, a strain of kung fu. "I think I'm pretty close to mastering it already," she says. "I took it for six months about six years ago, and I'm still knocking people out on occasion." *Fin.*

GREAT EXPECTATIONS

LOST: THE BIG REVEAL

MIND-BENDING TV SERIES PREPS FINAL SEASON

BY SOYIA ELLISON

Destiny, to borrow a phrase from Benjamin Linus, is a fickle bitch.

Just ask the creators of *American Gothic*, *EZ Streets* or *Boomtown*—all brilliant television dramas that died before they really had a chance to live, condemned as too smart, too complex, too demanding.

Then along comes a show about plane-crash survivors on a tropical island populated by polar bears and smoke monsters and whispering "Others." A show that regularly references philosophers like Locke and Rousseau and authors like Dickens, Steinbeck and Dostoevsky, a show that toys with the space-time continuum. Smart? Yep. Complex? Mm-hmm. Demanding? You betcha.

But destiny has not only let *Lost* live for five glorious, gasp-inducing seasons—it has given the show a nearly unprecedented opportunity to go out on its own terms. Three seasons ago, ABC and series producers Damon Lindelof and Carlton Cuse announced that *Lost* would end in 2010. Fans needed not fear mid-saga cancellation or storylines stretched beyond the breaking point. May 2010 would bring deliberate, timely resolution.

And now, here it is: the sixth and final season, trailing tantalizing promises of long-withheld answers. What happened when the bomb went off? Where's Claire? Why are Hurley's lottery numbers so significant? Who's running things, anyway—Jacob? Richard? Widmore?

One person who doesn't know is Michael Emerson, who recently won a Best Supporting Actor Emmy for playing master manipulator Benjamin Linus. Emerson first appeared on *Lost* in Season Two as stranded balloonist Henry Gale. (Or so he seemed; he turned out to be Ben, leader of the Others.)

But even Emerson didn't know that at the time. As far as he knew, he was in Hawaii to do a three-episode guest stint: "The role was mysterious on the page even then," he recalls today, fresh off filming his part of the new season's fourth episode. "I thought, 'There must be more to this, but I'll play along. I'm a lost balloonist.'"

It's a sensation he's gotten used to; after four seasons on *Lost*, he's abandoned the usual actor's concerns about backstory and endgame.

"You stop worrying about past, present and future," he says. "I've lost interest in outcomes, I guess. All I care about are kinds of cracklingly dangerous and electric present moments."

Fans, though, do care about outcomes—even if the ones they dream up don't come true.

"I want—and I expect—to be completely wrong in my expectations," says E.J. Kalafarski, who along with Chadwick Matlin taught a class on *Lost* at Boston's Tufts University in 2007. The convoluted theories—his own and others'—have kept him in the show's thrall: "You think, 'That *has* to be it, and if not, it's a cool idea anyway.' And then you find out how wrong you were."

Emerson, at least, knows enough to promise more perplexity.

"The first couple of episodes of the last season mystify me a little bit... Some new idea is falling into place. And if it's as earth-shattering as I think it is, it's going to be big."

> *"You think, 'That has to be it, and if not, it's a cool idea anyway.' And then you find out how wrong you were."*

But can anything be big *enough*? Finales are notoriously difficult to pull off. Consider *Seinfeld*. Co-creator Larry David wrote an hour-long episode that brought back dozens of beloved bit players and cleverly circled around to the series' opening dialogue—and everyone hated it. And *The Sopranos*? Infuriated fans are still crying "cop out" over its fade-to-black finale, even if it was arguably the perfect ending for such a morally ambiguous show. (What, you wanted to see Tony lying in a pool of blood?)

When fans love a show the way they loved *Seinfeld* or *The Sopranos*—the way they love *Lost*—they may never be completely satisfied, simply because they don't want to say goodbye.

Lost, with its ever-expanding cast, ever-changing allegiances and ever-multiplying time periods, has set an especially difficult challenge for itself.

"God help the producers," Matlin says. "In a way, I don't blame them if they cut corners. They've got a story to tell, and physics be damned. All I want is to have my mind blown one last time."

Photo of Michael Emerson by Florian Schneider / ABC

Mia Wasikowska as Alice

TIM BURTON IN WONDERLAND

DOWN THE RABBIT HOLE WITH *ALICE*

BY JEFFREY BLOOMER

Collectively, every contemporary film adaptation of *Alice in Wonderland* has been one long practice round for the inevitable Tim Burton version. Dozens of filmmakers have tackled this mysterious hallmark of children's lit, beginning with Cecil Hepworth's rickety first adaptation in 1903. This March, more than a century later, eccentric visualist Burton will unveil his own. Frankly, it's a marvel he and Alice didn't meet sooner.

Along with screenwriter Linda Woolverton (*Beauty and the Beast*), Burton has reshaped the classic story—Alice is now a 19-year-old Victorian girl who pines to escape the era's restraints. Based on what we've seen so far, *Alice* has elevated Burton's distinct visual ethos to new extremes. The initial shoot lasted just 40 days—far fewer than is typical for a project this big. The rest of the time was spent filling out the exuberant digital vistas that will flood the screen.

Throughout Burton's celebrated career, the most obvious constant has been his devotion to aggressive visual design, and in that respect *Alice in Wonderland* is poised to be his consummate work. The movie will join the growing chorus of Hollywood films set to employ advances in 3D as an immersive tool rather than a kitschy ticket-seller.

It'll also expand the role of the famous Mad Hatter. Playing the part? In his seventh collaboration with Burton, none other than Johnny Depp.

Photo (c) Disney Enterprises, Inc.

DRAKE'S PROGRESS

HEAT-SEEKING MC HITS THE BIG TIME

BY NICK MARINO

Drake knows. He knows that his debut album, due out this spring, faces stratospheric expectations. "I feel like people are gonna get it and pop it in," the 23-year-old Toronto rapper says, "and, no matter what it sounds like—I could make the most beautiful arrangements of hip-hop in the last 20 years—and people will still be like, 'Nope, he didn't do it.'" That's why he named the record *Thank Me Later*. Eventually, he believes, everyone will come around.

Why the hype? Blame lady-killing single "Best I Ever Had" (46 million MySpace streams and counting) and a slew of free online tracks for establishing Aubrey Drake Graham as a star without an album, the first pop artist to rap and sing with equal skill. He's now so intensely watched that, when he hurt his knee earlier this year, "Drake's Knee" got its own Twitter account.

The former child actor figures he missed out on a million-and-a-half, maybe two million bucks by staying on the sidelines for the last few months. Oh well. He's still "comfortable financially." Apparently his deal with Lil Wayne's label, Young Money, helps. "You get it off the deal," Drake says, "and of course you go from doing shows for whatever you can get to people start offering real money. Wayne gets *real* money. I don't get that. But even so, shows start climbing from 10 thousand to 20, 30, 40, 50, 60—whatever."

The album, when it finally comes, won't exactly be rock-inspired. But Drake *does* love Grizzly Bear, Kings of Leon and Edward Sharpe & the Magnetic Zeroes, and he's rhymed fiercely over a Coldplay hook. "What I wanna do," he says, "is sorta keep the element of those dark, sexy chord progressions that you hear in those indie-rock songs and bring it out more sonically with a more powerful drum sound. 'Cause my life has graduated from a very grey, gloomy point to a moment that's very triumphant. And I want the music to represent that."

Photo by Matt Barnes

TED LEO

TAKING OFF THE SEATBELT

BY AUSTIN L. RAY

Travis Morrison, the former Dismemberment Plan frontman, once described Ted Leo as "someone who could've made a million dollars on a major, but chose to stick it out on smaller labels." Leo, a tireless, iconic rock songwriter, has insisted on the independent route for close to two decades now, releasing vitally infectious, melodic punk records for labels like Gern Blandsten, Ace Fu, Lookout! and Touch and Go. He's currently preparing his Matador Records debut, due out in March, and he couldn't be happier with his new home, the label behind Guided By Voices, Mission of Burma, Pavement and Yo La Tengo.

"It's another case," Leo says, "of me being lucky to work with people who have a shared history with me in terms of growing up in the American punk world of the '80s."

A New Jersey native, Leo dabbled in various bands throughout the '90s before settling on the Ted Leo and the Pharmacists moniker around the turn of that decade. He and a rotating crew have been making catchy rock ever since, owing a subtle debt to the likes of The Jam, Elvis Costello and The Clash.

Following the unfortunate demise of Touch and Go in 2009, and before he'd signed to Matador, Leo had finished "almost a whole album" with his band, but it just didn't feel right. After finding himself without a label, under no pressure and with a sense of precarious freedom, he wrote and recorded even more songs. Shortly after finishing the album, Leo went to Austin, Texas, to talk with Matador co-president Gerard Cosloy over iced coffee and shots of Jameson. The two instantly clicked.

"Rightly or wrongly, I often associate the genuinely sincere with the profoundly naive," Cosloy says. "Ted's records remind me that you can have a pretty thoughtful take on the state of your world without the naive part—or sacrificing one iota of sincerity. I think he's already got a more impressive body of work than many of the guys I figure were influences."

Leo's aversion to the major-label path isn't without consideration. In the mid-'90s, during his time fronting D.C. rock outfit Chisel, Leo was courted by the majors. On one hand, he felt like he was being handed a proverbial golden ticket, but on the other, he just couldn't trust it. "I always kind of walk away feeling like it's the quote-unquote 'right thing to do,' both right for me and right in some undefinable and possibly laughable punk-ethos way," he says. "I don't need to be a rock star. I don't want to be a rock star. [I just want] a place where I can have a career. I know where I came from, and I know where I live and I actually kind of disdain a lot of the mass-media major-market music world. At the risk of burning some bridges here, it's not really for me."

Still, Leo is not without his fervent rock-star admirers. In recent years, he's toured with Pearl Jam and Death Cab for Cutie, whose guitarist, Chris Walla, has already staked his claim as Ted Leo appreciator numero uno.

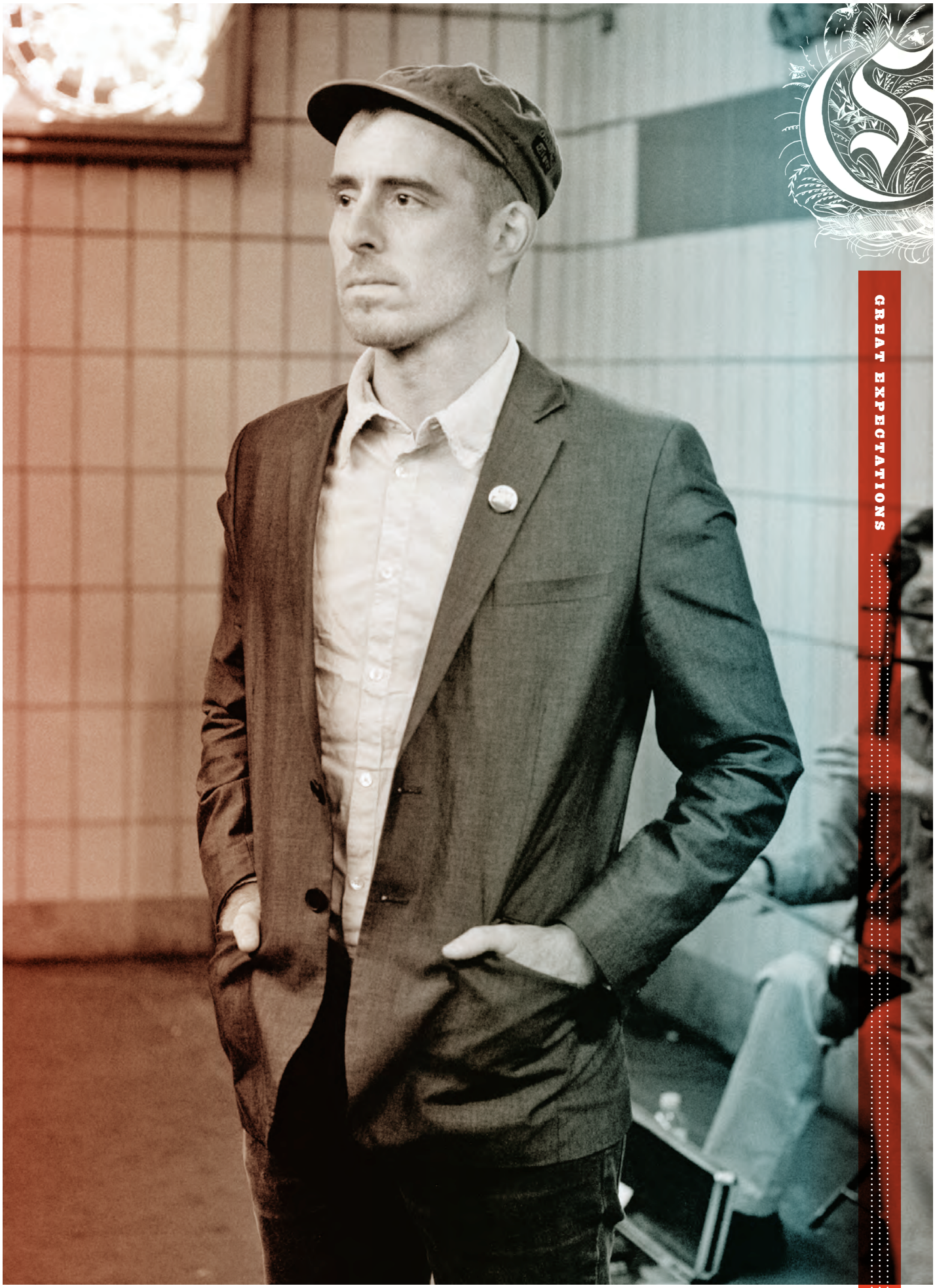
"I probably spend more time talking about Ted Leo than I should," Walla sheepishly admits. "I'm a super fan. There is no way to not make this interview a totally geeky—I'm just tongue-tied. It's ridiculous. I love Ted Leo. That's pretty much how I talk about it. I get all hyperbolic. I actually find it kind of difficult to say anything intelligent about Ted Leo."

"I know where I came from, and I know where I live and I actually kind of disdain a lot of the mass-media major-market music world. At the risk of burning some bridges here, it's not really for me."

One can only assume Leo's joining the Matador roster will afford him more opportunities to turn rock stars into fanboys. And with a fresh set of tunes, these days the veteran songwriter emits a palpable sense of newfound energy.

"It's got some borderline-embarrassing stabs at blue-eyed soul, which I often do, I guess," Leo says. "It's got harmony licks a la Thin Lizzy, which I also often do. I just feel really good about the songwriting in general. Beyond that, what I really, really like about this batch of songs is it feels totally liberated. It feels like we were finally able to take our seatbelt off."

Photo by Matias Corral



GREAT EXPECTATIONS

SHE & HIM AGAIN

CHARMING DUO PLOTS *VOLUME TWO*

BY RACHAEL MADDUX

"Zooey and I both get most of our inspiration from listening to older records," singer/guitarist M. Ward says of himself and bandmate Zooey Deschanel, whose 2008 debut, *Volume One*, remains the greatest collaboration of all time between a Portland, Ore., acoustic virtuoso and an indie-film-sweetheart-turned-songstress. Ward assures us that their follow-up, due in spring, will mine the same country, folk and AM-gold touchstones as its predecessor—not like they had a choice, he says. "We're not the most up-to-date people."

There are some new twists, though. "The songs are more of a snapshot of a period of time than *Volume One* was," says Deschanel, who mined eight years of original material for the debut, but wrote the new album (which she calls "a collection of fables") during its year-and-a-half-long production process. Recording happened in Portland and L.A., and was protracted thanks to Deschanel's film work and Ward's half-million other musical projects. "Our lives are not incredibly unbusy," he says. "This definitely required some scheduling."

Production took a while, too, because they wanted everything just *so*. "It shows a lot more dimensions to Zooey's writing, and on the production side I definitely experimented with different ideas that I hadn't tried before," Ward says, noting that the bright shades of the debut are brighter here, the darks darker—"like a great photograph."

"Matt has really outdone himself with the production," says Deschanel, who arranged the album's backing vocals, including an appearance by Nebraska indie-poppers Tilly and the Wall (but nothing from Deschanel's new husband, Ben Gibbard—although "we all think he's a great singer," Ward notes. "Obviously.")

Ward says "there's nothing really difficult about making music with Zooey" and Deschanel affirms it's "always a pleasure" to work with him, too. The new record's name happened just as easily. "It was a hopeful title, *Volume One*," Ward says. "I'm just excited for people to hear *Volume Two*."

Photo by Lee Ann Mueller

MICHAEL HANEKE

THE TORMENTER RETURNS WITH CANNES PRIZEWINNER

BY MARK KROTOV

Michael Haneke film is always an event. Each one incites an onslaught of parking-lot conversations, angry blog posts and endless fast-forwarding and rewinding when it hits DVD. Which is why the revelations and evasions of 2010's *The White Ribbon* are so exciting: They promise to provoke more passion than ever.

Known for the haunting *Caché* and *The Piano Teacher*, 67-year-old Austrian rabble-rouser Haneke won the Palme d'Or at Cannes for his new period picture, set in 1913 and 1914. *The White Ribbon* chronicles the shocking violence that terrorizes a quiet German village: A horse trips over a wire hung between two trees, injuring the town's doctor; the farmer's wife falls through a barn's rotted floor; a disabled child is brutally tortured. These events plague the villagers while mystifying and disturbing the audience.

Arguably Haneke's most elegant film to date ("My other films are elegant, too," the director tells *Paste*, at once wry and dead serious), *Ribbon* is filmed in gorgeous black and white. "We know the period from photographs, which make it easier to understand," he says. But this is Haneke, so the aesthetic also provides what he calls "an element of abstraction." *The White Ribbon* is so full of resonant images—ink-black forests, snowy fields, bales of hay—that the beautiful, sensual experience often seems the point. Haneke, of course, disputes this: "The beauty of nature is useful for contrast," he says. And that's that.

The White Ribbon is so full of resonant images—ink-black forests, snowy fields, bales of hay—that the beautiful, sensual experience often seems the point.

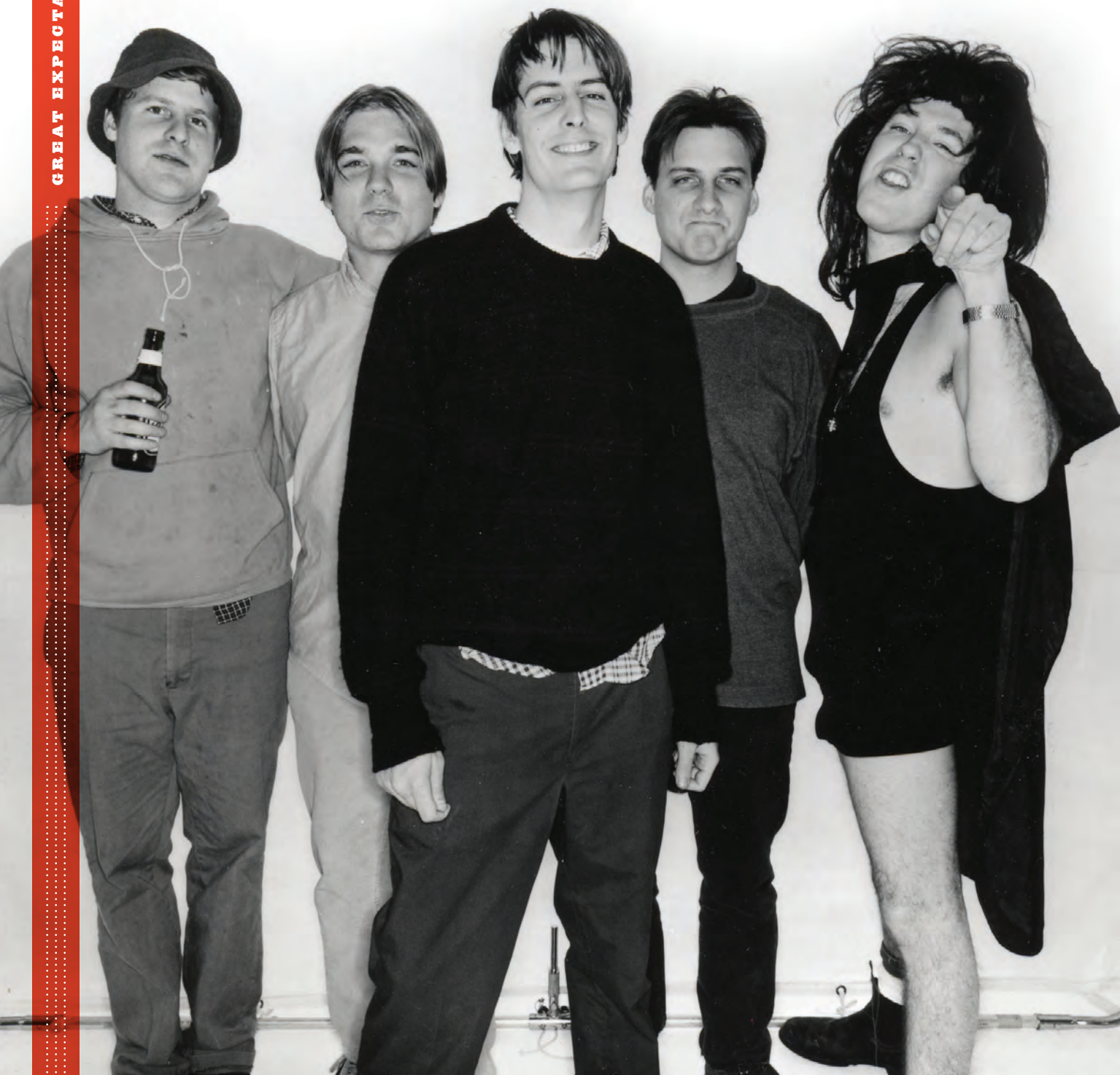
It's true that every ravishing tableau reminds us of the village's cruel, disturbed adults—and, more pointedly, their offspring. Children are the dark heart and cold soul of this calmly portentous film. (What, you wonder, might these German kids do 25 years later?) The children's activities will compel arguments among friends long after they've left the theater. Indeed, Haneke has already anticipated those disagreements: "I always like," he says, "to nourish a sense of mistrust toward the filmic reality."

Photo (c) Films du Losange, courtesy of Sony Pictures Classics

PAVEMENT: ELEVATE ME LATER

A DECADE AFTER DISSOLVING, THE DEFINITIVE INDIE-ROCK BAND ANNOUNCES 2010'S MOST ANTICIPATED REUNION. BUT LET'S NOT GET TOO EXCITED, OK?

BY COREY DUBROWA



Stephen Malkmus—the Artist Formerly Known as S.M. in his days fronting '90s indie-rock darlings Pavement—has spent the last decade starting a family, fashioning a solo career with his band the Jicks, blending into Oregon's lush scenery and gradually becoming the Bill Belichick of the alt-rock world, answering direct questions about his old group's plans as if parsing the weekly injury list for the smallest particle of data that would still qualify as a plausible answer.

"People come up to us after shows saying 'Will you do it?' or wanting to talk about it," Malkmus once told me over afternoon drinks in Portland, "but it's not like I feel I'm being dismissed because of what I used to do. We could tell [our publicist] 'no Pavement questions' but it would only make interviewers more excited about it."

Which makes the band's recently announced reunion shows all the more tantalizing: After selling out all four of its September 2010 Central Park SummerStage shows a year in advance (the earliest such shows have ever been offered for sale, much less sold-out), the band's classic lineup of Malkmus, guitarist Scott "Spiral Stairs" Kannberg, bassist/new Sonic Youth member Mark Ibold, percussionist Bob Nastanovich and drummer Steve West have confirmed they'll headline the Sasquatch! festival on Memorial Day weekend in Washington state, and play and curate an All Tomorrow's Parties weekender that same month at Butlin's Holiday Centre in Minehead U.K., with other global locations to be announced. It's enough to get the lo-fi quintet's obsessive followers breathing heavily, even if the Pavement camp was equally quick to pour cold water over the affair by advising fans that "this tour is not a prelude to additional jaunts and/or a permanent reunion."

"There were rumors swirling around for two to three years that were completely unprovoked," says David Viecelli, the band's longtime agent. "Especially after Bob's wedding in Nashville, when four of the five guys were onstage together. It's not like there was any acrimony amongst them," he insists—indeed, Malkmus has often mentioned his former bandmates and their shared passion for online fantasy basketball, making clear they were all still friendly with one another —"but it needed to be organic. Stephen, in particular, didn't want Pavement to just be another band that gets together, trying to get every last dollar we could. It was most important that this be the best live version of Pavement ever to play."

Even the band members themselves seem somewhat stunned at the ease and rapidity with which the reunion finally came together, a decade after the band's final show at London's Brixton Academy, in which Malkmus pointed to a pair of handcuffs attached to his mic stand and told the audience, "These symbolize what it's like being in a band all these years." At its best, Pavement played shambling melodic post-punk with every edge frayed. By the end, the band itself was a shambles.

"A bunch of time went by, and everyone did their own thing," says co-founder Kannberg. "It's gonna be a lot easier for everyone now. We had no idea it would turn into all this—it was more like 'let's do a few shows.' But the sell-outs—it's obvious we could've done another four, easily. It's just crazy. The biggest show we ever played was in London, and that was only because people knew it was our last show! Otherwise, we were just trudging along, trying to make some good records and some money. And I think we just hit the wall. But 10 years does a lot. New people come into the equation, start buying your records, people get older, and I guess have more money too, probably. And then the Internet has made everything a completely different animal."

The band has already begun planning rehearsals—to begin in Portland this February—in anticipation of whatever shape the reunion tour may take. But whether reviving such sacred indie texts as *Slanted and Enchanted*, dashing through multiple sets of Pavement's greatest near-misses with the mainstream, or even writing new material, it's clear that a return to those gold soundz is neither a crisis nor a boring change (as the band once sang), but a central component of 2010's year in rock.

Photo by M. Wong

PAVEMENT: *A Beginner's Guide*

BY NICK MARINO

Slanted and Enchanted **(1992)**

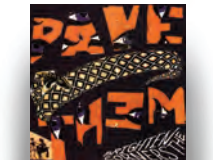
A lo-fi rock masterpiece, jagged with shards of melody. The dudes played like they didn't care, but no one gets this good without caring.

Crooked Rain, Crooked Rain **(1994)**

Anthemic and crunchy. Classics include power-pop nugget "Cut Your Hair" and the jangly Smashing Pumpkins diss "Range Life."

Wowee Zowee **(1995)**

Loose and proggy, a precursor to Malkmus' post-Pavement band, the Jicks. Like the Beastie Boys' *Paul's Boutique*, its reputation has improved over the years.



Brighten The Corners **(1997)**

A generous mix of rockers and ballads, and a fine encapsulation of the classic Pavement sound. "Shady Lane" and "Stereo" belong on any greatest-hits mixtape

Terror Twilight **(1999)**

Produced by Radiohead knob-twiddler Nigel Godrich, this swan song shimmers like a distant star. "Bring on the major leagues," Malkmus sang, knowing they'd never come.

BREAKING BAD

THE UNLIKELY HEROISM OF A METH-DEALING SCHOOLTEACHER

BY KATE KIEFER

On paper, high-school chemistry teacher Walter White is despicable. He cooks up high-grade crystal methamphetamine and sells it to faceless losers. He gassed and suffocated one drug dealer, strangled another, and blew up his distributor's office using fulminated mercury. He made his business partner Jesse dissolve a dead body in hydrofluoric acid, and forced his 16-year-old son to drink shot after shot of tequila until he threw up in a swimming pool. He tried to rape his pregnant wife. Oh, and he steals chemistry supplies from the school where he works.

On his worst day, Walt went to Jesse's apartment to find him and his train-wreck girlfriend Jane asleep and strung out on heroin. When she started coughing and throwing up, a decent human being would have turned her over, sat her up, maybe even called 911. But Jane posed a threat to Walt's business—so he just stood there, watching the poor girl choke to death on her own vomit.

In spite of all this, Walt is our hero. We like his wife, we love his son, and every week during *Breaking Bad* (which begins its third season in March) we hope Walt doesn't die. Before becoming a monster, he was sympathetic—a dorky Albuquerque science teacher who took a part-time job at a car wash to make ends meet. He had a teenaged son with cerebral palsy and an unexpected baby on the way, and he'd just found out he had stage-three lung cancer and two years to live. Desperate times called for dangerous measures, and Walt decided to use his chemistry skills in the most profitable way he knew how—making meth. The medical bills were piling up. He did it for his family.

Actor Bryan Cranston (*Malcolm in the Middle*, *Seinfeld*) made a seamless leap from his history of comedic roles to this intensely dramatic one. As a sick teacher, husband and father, he's pitiful; as a chemist gone bad, a ruthless drug dealer known as Heisenberg, he's terrifying. "I had Bryan in mind early on to play the part of Walt," says series creator Vince Gilligan. "I knew him from working with him on *The X-Files*, where I was a writer. I put him in an episode where we had a character who was awful—he was a racist, unpleasant creep—but when he died at the end, we needed the audience to feel empathy for him. Bryan knocked it out of the ballpark. Then and there I realized not just what a fine actor he was, but how likeable he was, and how humanity just seemed to ooze out of him. We needed a guy like that."

Cranston, in turn, was immediately drawn to *Breaking Bad* after reading the script. "The first page is the first minute or so of the pilot episode—a middle-aged man drives ferociously in an RV, wearing a gas mask and only tighty-whitey underwear. Behind him, two dead bodies slide back and forth with the motion of the RV. Next to him in the seat is another man, passed out," he says. "I'm going, 'What the hell? What's going on?' It captures you right from that moment."

It's a bold premise indeed—especially for AMC—and Gilligan doesn't dodge the drug world's filthy realities. There's blood and guts, and a decapitated head on a live tortoise. "Every now and then," Gilligan says, "when I stop and look around from my little office here with my writers, I think 'How did this show ever make it on the air?'" Sure, HBO has vampires and Showtime's got a soccer-mom selling pot and a handsome serial killer who targets murderers, but those are *premium* channels. Plus, marijuana is small potatoes compared to meth, and serial killers and vampires don't exactly hit close to home. But somehow *Breaking Bad* does, rarely requiring a suspension of disbelief.

"There is a way to be provocative without being exploitative," Cranston says, "and I think that's what *Breaking Bad* does so well—we pose an interesting proposition: 'What are the conditions that would make a mild-mannered, nice guy who'd never even got a moving-violation ticket, let alone been arrested, turn into a criminal?' I think people look at that and go, 'I've felt desperation. I've worried about losing my job or paying for my kid's braces. And this is the avenue that this man chose.'"

Gilligan makes sure that Walt pays for his sins: His wife doesn't trust him, he has to feign appreciation when his handicapped son creates a website to raise money for his poor, sick dad (savewalterwhite.com, which you can actually visit online), and he's paranoid that his brother-in-law, a feisty DEA agent, is on to him. Not to mention, his cancer is progressing. It's a dark world. When Walt carries his newborn baby into the garage, shows her the stacks of cash he scored from a drug deal and whispers, "Daddy did that for you," there's a glimmer of guilt in Daddy's eye.

"I told Vince that if this worked out, our job as partners in this storytelling would be to connect with the humanity of this man, and allow the audience to see his vulnerability, his fear, his hope, his joy, his intelligence, his struggle, on a very real basis," says Cranston. "And if we are able to do that, we have a chance at a very unique show." And that's why so many people watch—Gilligan and Cranston have found our soft spot. We believe that our evil protagonist is good at heart. We know that he's spun out of control, and we're caught up in his story. We've come to recognize that look in his eye, the one that says, "What have I become?" And when the series ends and Walter White dies, whether quietly in bed or violently outside an RV, we'll miss the son of a bitch.

Photo of Bryan Cranston by Ben Leuner / Sony Pictures Television

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the High Strung tour like crazy, overshoot the finish and end up back at the "Waffle Wagon"!

Find a **Peekers** rabbit hole. Move ahead 3 spaces.

You've been bad. **Floating Action** gives you "**50 Lashes**" and you lose a turn.

Hanging with **Giant Cloud** leaves you a bit dazed and confused... You had a great time, but go back 2 spaces.

Dr. Dog's song, "**Today**" gives you some extra pep in your step, move ahead 2 spaces.

Fell in love with **The Teeth**'s ***Carry the Wood EP*** all over again, spend all day listening over and over. Lose 2 turns.

Generationals give you some magical elixir, "**It Keeps You Up**" and you move ahead 3 spaces.

Goofin' with the bees and **The Spinto Band!** Run for your life! Move ahead 4 spaces.

Your van is awesome, all the cops went to bed and you haul ass to the next city. Move ahead 3 spaces.

You forgot where you parked the van. Go back 3 spaces.

Go to New Orleans! WOoOooO-HooOOoO!

Pepi Ginsberg says "**Shake This**". Roll a die and whatever the number is, skip ahead that many spaces.

Whoa! You've found the **Golden Boots**. Go forward 6 spaces, back 3 spaces, forward 2 spaces and roll the dice, multiply by 2 and move ahead that many spaces. Do this all with your eyes closed.

CHOOSE YOUR VAN!

ATK.....7
DEF.....3

MAG.....6
STA.....4

CUT ME

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THE PASTE RECKONING

MILES DAVIS → 68

ILLUSTRATION BY **YUKO SHIMIZU**

RATINGS GUIDE: **0 to 2.9** REGRETTABLE | **3 to 4.9** FORGETTABLE | **5 to 6.9** RESPECTABLE | **7 to 8.9** COMMENDABLE | **9 to 10** PHENOMENAL

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FOUNTAIN OF YOUTH

Music's cookie-monster contrarian gets his Peter Pan on

BY AUSTIN L. RAY

TOM WAITS

Glitter and Doom Live ANTI-

"Now, when I was a boy
my daddy sat me on his knee
and he told me, he told me many things.
And he said, 'Son,'
he always called me son,
he said, 'There's a lot of things in
this world, son, you're going to
have absolutely no use for,'
and he was right."

-Tom Waits, "Lucky Day"

Although you'd be hard pressed to find a cooler old dude in the universe, and despite all the rather geriatric trappings he's happily embraced over the years (fedora hats, a propensity to ramble, etc.), 60-year-old Tom Waits really is young at heart, waxing hilarious between songs, starring as an oddball character in a movie every few years, and maintaining a perpetually puckish outlook on life.

Glitter and Doom marks Waits' third live album in his 35-plus-year career. For 1975's *Nighthawks at the Diner*, a small audience decamped to a Los Angeles recording studio where Waits set up shop, spitting stories, jokes and brand-new songs over a legit jazz band. The opening act was a stripper named Dewana. At the other end of the spectrum was 1988's *Big Time*, a more standard-issue live record with a pair of previously unreleased tracks and, unfortunately, no interesting back story of which to speak.

Glitter and Doom Live is more like the latter, but that's not meant as a put-down. The record is culled from Waits' 2008 tour (which covered mostly the Southeastern U.S. and notable European locales), and is split between two discs,

one boasting songs and the other containing a monolithic 35-minute track of Waits doing standup comedy, tossing off fun facts and cracking wise over spare piano accompaniment. Both discs are edited so they feel like one cohesive slab, despite the fact that they're very clearly not. This is nice, in that the song selections are cherry-picked, but the listener still gets an experience that feels like Waits' legendary live show.

Like many of his musical contemporaries—Bob Dylan, Mick Jagger, Bruce Springsteen, etc.—Waits has a voice that's seen better days. He started cultivating his signature rasp decades prior to these live recordings, and while he can't quite replicate the sweet-voiced love songs of his lonesome 1973 debut, *Closing Time*, he doesn't need to (nor does he try on this release); his gruff vocals give new life to tender ballads and increase the scruffy charm of his already-brutish selections. It's as if the perennially ornery songwriter has played the ultimate prank on Father Time. "You're going to try and take my voice away someday, huh?" he seems to say. "Well, I already took it myself!"

Like any good live record, *Glitter and Doom* has something to teach the listener. *The Black Rider*, Waits' 1993 studio album of songs from a stage production he put on with playwright Robert Wilson and legendary beat writer William S. Burroughs, is generally hailed as a bizarre and difficult record—the type of album even Waits completists will excuse you for skipping. And yet Waits plays two songs from that record on *Glitter and Doom*, including a heart-wrenching rendition of "Lucky Day" that stands as one of the greatest performances in Waits' extensive oeuvre. Far from a live greatest-hits offering, this new set serves as more of an odds-and-sods compilation, sprinkling forgotten tracks amongst well-known favorites.

For those who self-identify as Tom Waits Fans, *Glitter and Doom Live* succeeds on pretty much every level. A petty argument could be made that perhaps the tracklist skews a little too obscure/modern-day, ignoring myriad great tracks from Waits milestones such as *Rain Dogs* (one song included),

His gruff vocals give new life to tender ballads and increase the scruffy charm of his already-brutish selections. It's as if the perennially ornery songwriter has played the ultimate prank on Father Time. "You're going to try and take my voice away someday, huh?" he seems to say. "Well, I already took it myself!"

Sworfishtrombones (none) and others. Because of this, the record might be a little intimidating to those unfamiliar with Waits' catalog. Then again, newbies who start with *Glitter and Doom* will find hours and hours more to love once they dig in. After all, Waits has always had a contrarian streak in him. He's a musical Peter Pan, doing exactly what he wants when he wants, and, damn what anyone thinks, he'll never grow up.

8.9

AUSTIN L. RAY IS *PASTE*'S WEB EDITOR. HE FIRST HEARD TOM WAITS IN HIGH-SCHOOL ART CLASS. HE THANKS IAN OLLER FOR THE EXPERIENCE, AND APOLOGIZES TO MRS. MINDER FOR NOT PAYING MORE ATTENTION.

Photo by Michael O'Brien

JUST PEACHY

Woodsy, wonderful seventh LP by Portland singer/songwriter

BY RACHAEL MADDUX

LAURA VEIRS

July Flame RAVEN MARCHING BAND

Laura Veirs' seventh album, set for release in the blustery throes of January, takes its name from a kind of peach that finds its way into farmer's-market bins in the hottest weeks of the year—a peach, the story goes, that cured her of a nasty bout with writer's block one steamy Portland afternoon a few summers back. Still, it's hard to imagine a better soundtrack to the chilly months of wood smoke, crackling leaves, deep Vs of geese honking overhead and squash simmering on kitchen stovetops than this collection of heady, steady, pensive songs. Fall is a time to hunker down, to hoard warm memories of spring and summer as a balm against the coming winter winds, to sift through what's been and wonder what's to come, and Veirs does this better than almost anyone.

July Flame is a feel-good record of the oddest sort, a melancholy meditation on happiness and its delicate transience. Early on, Veirs teases out her own temptation and desire. First cut "I Can See Your Tracks" is a lovely exercise in self-restraint ("Oh, I

can smell the smoke / From your fire, babe / But I'll leave you alone / And sleep in this lonely cave") followed by the title track, its synth-hazed choruses of "Can I call you mine? / Can I call you mine?" reaching out for something—anything—just beyond her grasp. Later, on "Little Deschutes," when Veirs wonders, "Why care about yesterday's haze / When the stars above are all ablaze?" it feels less like rhetorical supplication than a prodding note-to-self, a would-be mantra.

My Morning Jacket's Jim James and Northwestern mainstay Karl Blau provide glorious harmonies throughout, Blau in particular wailing spooky as an October gale through a barely-shut window on "Life Is Good Blues." Veirs' voice has a slight tendency to sound trapped behind her tongue, which is part of her charm, but it's good to hear her sounding loose and limber, especially on "Where Are You Driving?" and "When You Give Your Heart." "And my stampeding buffalo / Stops in her tracks and watches the snow / Falling through the old oak tree / When you give your heart to me," she sings on the latter, likely marking the first time a singer/songwriter has compared herself in love to a thousand-pound land mammal.

That, too, is part of Veirs' wry charm—as a songwriter, she's equal parts fabulist and naturalist. Her past albums have always felt like fantastical hiking journals set to music, and *July Flame* follows suit. But if all its brewing storms, battling birds of prey and pollinators flexing their wings seem to suggest a sort of nerdy detachment from proper society—some kind of animistic preoccupation that eschews all concerns of the human heart—well, slow your hurried feet, and consider the world Veirs sees through her spectacle-framed eyes. It's a thousand human dramas writ in weather and earth—the shoots of spring, the hail storms, the deep green rivers all yearning and raging just like we do, always borne forward, out and up, despite our unreadiness, despite our protestations.

It's a thousand human dramas writ in weather and earth—the shoots of spring, the hail storms, the deep green rivers all yearning and raging just like we do, always borne forward, out and up, despite our unreadiness, despite our protestations.

July Flame carries a mood of wistful nostalgia thanks to pangs of pedal steel (courtesy of The Decemberists' Chris Funk), heart-shattering viola (by Eyvind Kang, who's now lent his bow work to six of her LPs) and Veirs' nimble finger-picked guitar. This album is warmer and rootsier than her earlier work, which boasted a kind of cautious experimentalism. *July Flame* is carefully composed, ever-deepening, glinting and glowing in new ways each time it's played; there's an inkling of something greater coming just around the bend, but for now it's Veirs' finest work. And so let us curl up in our burrows with these songs and our own flickering July flames 'til the green shoots return and the rivers run full again. "It's gonna take a long, long time," Veirs sings on her resolute final track. "But we're gonna make something so fine."

8.5

Photo by David Belisle

Vampire Weekend photo by Søren Solkær Starbird

VAMPIRE WEEKEND

Contra XL

Brainy indie upstarts prove masterful debut was no fluke

Vampire Weekend's debut cartwheeled gleefully from one infectious musical idea to the next, seducing listeners with a syrupy-sweet cocktail of Afro-pop, squeaky-clean '60s surf rock and harpsichord passages that nodded at Mark Mothersbaugh's playful compositions on Wes Anderson soundtracks. It was hard to listen to that first batch of tunes without sensing vast stores of glittering pop left to mine in the endlessly forking creative arteries beneath the band's goofy, cardigan-wrapped exterior. On their second LP, the youngsters don't disappoint. *Contra* opener "Horchata" displays a caliber of pop songcraft and melodic intuition that gives The Shins' James Mercer a run for his harmony, and the feathery lightness of lead singer Ezra Koenig's voice allows him to indulge fluttering melodies that would sink under the weight of more overbearing pipes. "White Sky" dances along with skittering keyboard arpeggios and a refrain of sweeping falsetto "oohs" that beg for spontaneous crowd karaoke. *Contra*'s most indelible cut, the sublimely arranged and lyrically evocative "Taxi Cab," adopts an emotional vulnerability and depth that Vampire Weekend's darker musical cousins The Strokes always seemed too fashionable to plumb. **8.7**

JASON KILLINGSWORTH

HEM

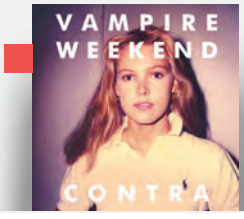
Twelfth Night

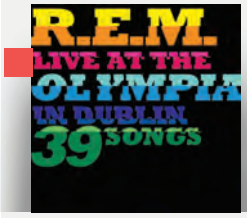
WAVELAND

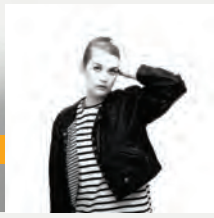
Lilting, lovely soundtrack from this summer's* Shakespeare in the Park *production

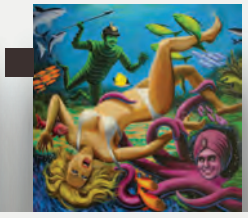
Each summer, a star-studded cast in conjunction with the Public Theater mounts a much-anticipated Shakespeare play in Central Park. Brooklyn band Hem worked closely with Daniel Sullivan, the director of this year's critically acclaimed *Twelfth Night* (starring Anne Hathaway, Audra McDonald, David Pittu, Julie White, and Raúl Esparza) to create a soundtrack for the production, which has now been recorded and released. Nearly half the album consists of tracks that didn't make it to the stage. For this project, Hem channeled its indie-folk-rock energy into a new package—vaguely Irish reels and scraps of Shakespeare's words set to lilting tunes. If it's not particularly innovative, it's still lovely; some of the brief tracks echo Thomas Newman's sparse soundtrack stylings, and traditional reels are mixed indistinguishably with the new work. Unfortunately, it doesn't play very well as an album—most tracks last about a minute or less, making it a disjointed listen. But it's a wonderful artifact from one of the summer's most-praised theater productions, and each individual piece is buoyant, joyful and altogether fun. **7.2**

ALISSA WILKINSON









R.E.M.

Live at the Olympia

WARNER BROS

An extended live lap through rarities and new ephemera

Measured in raw commercial reach, R.E.M.'s appeal may be getting more "selective," as the euphemism goes, but on this new live double-disc their edge feels recently sharpened. Staged across five nights in Dublin in advance of *Accelerate*, the set reels off sketches from the band's then-forthcoming 14th album, including some that ultimately never made the cut. Juxtaposed with a subtle cherry-picking of their earlier work, it's a coy but endearing alternative history of the band, who seem thoughtful curators. "New Test Leper," "Cuyahoga" and "Electrolite" flow by as a gorgeous triplet, while the finale is a reverent take on "Gardening at Night." The recording and performance are at times a little ragged in voice and tone, but the band's earlier semi-punk instincts ring through and its taste remains impeccable. 8.3

JEFF LEVEN

EL PERRO DEL MAR

Love is Not Pop

THE CONTROL GROUP

Sweden's duchess of the doldrums contemplates our sour times

El Perro Del Mar is the *nom de triste* of Swedish pop chanteuse Sarah Assbring, whose fourth LP is filled with an almost unbearably melancholic, lovelorn pop that wafts through chilly grey air. It also features a distinct modernization of Assbring's sound—but when you listen to the album's seven tracks (plus three club-minded remixes) and begin sifting through the musical lineage (Sundays, C86, Bettie Serveert) comprising low-key odes to heartache such as "Change of Heart" and "L is For Love," it becomes apparent that she's still a pretty far cry from fellow Swede/dancing queen Robyn. At heart, the Sea Dog remains a sad-eyed lady of the lowlands. 6.3

COREY DUBROWA

THE KING KHAN & BBQ SHOW

Invisible Girl

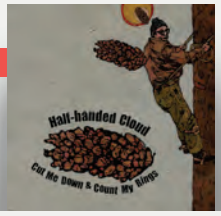
IN THE RED

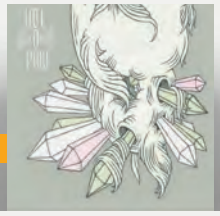
More skuzzy garage rock from increasingly visible pair

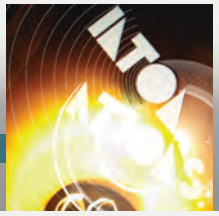
Before he donned his gold lamé hot pants and played wild shows like the unholy offspring of Little Richard and Screamin' Jay Hawkins, King Khan made a pair of loose, lewd, lo-fi albums with fellow Montreal ex-pat and former bandmate BBQ (a.k.a. Mark Sultan). Three years after their lip-smacking *What's for Dinner?*, the duo re-teams for another set of R&B-inflected, '60s-influenced garage rock with their juvenile-delinquent charms and dirty minds intact. "Taste-buds" is both ridiculously raunchy and insanely catchy, while "Anala" only hints at deeper indiscretions with its lascivious doo-wop backing vocals. "Third Ave." is a girl-group ballad writ small, but the limitations of the line-up—just Khan's skuzzbucket guitar and BBQ's primitive drums—make it sound bigger and more immediate than a retro retread has a right to be. More than just revivalists, the duo plays these decades-old styles like they never went out of fashion, which makes Invisible Girl a strange and satisfying record. 6.8

STEPHEN M. DEUSNER

R.E.M. photo by Cass Bird







HALF-HANDED CLOUD

Cut Me Down & Count My Rings

ASTHMATIC KITTY

Song-a-minute songwriter unearths some gems

John Ringhofer is a master of intricately fragmented art pop—a songwriter who made his name constructing grand song puzzles out of miniature interlocking pieces, with four full-length releases so tightly constructed that individual moments can hardly be extracted without compromising their elaborate song-suite structures. And his short-attention-span musical theater is a revelation on *Cut Me Down & Count My Rings*, a dazzling 46-song collection drawn from his previous EPs, compilations, cassette singles and vinyl releases. Spanning 2000 to 2009, the tracks chart Half-handed Cloud's trajectory from playfully shambling lo-fi pop to increasingly sophisticated arrangements, from left-field Christmas tunes to song cycles about sheep. Best of all are the five ornately adorned songs drawn from 2005's *What's the Remedy?* EP (a collaboration with Sufjan Stevens) and "Pre-teen Apocalyptic Film Acting," a three-minute medley of seven Why? tracks, both vivid examples of Ringhofer's remarkable ability to cram an album's worth of ideas into a few minutes.

MATT FINK 7.8

HOLOPAW

Oh, Glory. Oh, Wilderness.

BAKERY OUTLET RECORDS

Soft-spoken indie band rocks on excellent third album

On its first two albums, Holopaw ruffled hushed folk with synths and loops; nestled in almost sterile arrangements, John Orth's flutey voiced defined fragility, as circular arpeggios turned like quiet screws. This new album, thankfully, still sounds like Holopaw—it's just that now Orth's voice is often buffeted by bright bursting chords and leads glinting with pretty little errors, as standard but effective strings and horns sub for electronics. The result is an album with hardly a dull moment. Its lyrics are holistic and tender, rich with impressions of shipwrecks, insects, smoke and spearmint. Prayerful moments like "The Last Transmission (Honeybee)" offset the rockers, which have a muted glow—bone-weary yet anthemic. The guitar on "The Art Teacher and the Little Stallion" catches like a sob in the throat, as Orth sings, "Whistled through your crooked teeth / I never noticed your crooked teeth." That sums up the whole record: It's a startled elegy, crammed with emotionally penetrating details.

BRIAN HOWE 8.0

BASIA BULAT

Heart of My Own

ROUGH TRADE

Canadian singer/songwriter's sophomore release easier to admire than to love

It's clear from the burr in Basia Bulat's Natalie Merchant-style vocals and her Joni-esque boho orientation (circa *Blue*) that she has talent to burn and a solid sense of musical antecedents, and yet it's hard to get excited about her new album. *Heart of My Own* dawdles along—from tasteful trad-Irish ballads (the title track and "I'm Forgetting Everyone") to mid-tempo tracks that wouldn't sound out of place on a Martina McBride disc ("If Only You")—without ever making much of an impact or providing a sense of what's happening beneath Bulat's carefully cultivated sonic surfaces. Recorded at the Hotel2Tango studio in Montreal with Howard Bilerman (Arcade Fire), you almost wish that some of the Canadian indie scene's colorful, strident sense of experimentation had found its way onto the record. When songs such as "The Shore" flaunt their shaggy patchwork quilt of instrumentation for a moment or two, Bulat's immense potential begins to poke its way through the tarpaulin shielding the album from closer inspection.

COREY DUBROWA 5.7

LOWELL BRAMS

Music for Insomnia

ASTHMATIC KITTY

Latest in the series of Asthmatic Kitty founder's ambient efforts is neither fish nor fowl

Lowell Brams' new experimental disc is a curiosity and a milestone in equal measure. On one hand, it's hard to imagine that anyone would ever willingly devote multiple spins to a disc containing such "compositions" as willfully weird and jittery opener "Chattering Garden Trolls" or the *Metal Machine Music*-emulating "Short Circadian Partita," even as background music for vacuuming on a Saturday afternoon. On the other hand, I've listened to Pink Floyd's *Ummagumma* a dozen or more times (its tripped-out wankfest, "Several Species of Small Furry Animals Gathered Together in a Cave and Grooving with a Pict," perfectly emulated by *Music for Insomnia*'s "Hypnagogic Hallucination"), so I guess anything's possible. Brams is "helped" throughout by his stepson Sufjan Stevens, who adds various flavors of keys, guitars, drums, woodwinds and esoteric percussion (including "hair stylist"?), while The National's Bryce Dessner contributes guitars to high-lonesome closer, "A Cross Section of Clown Mountain." Being an insomniac, it's possible that such an album might provide the perfect soundtrack to my condition; its other uses remain less clear.

COREY DUBROWA 5.9

Half-Handed Cloud photo by Brandon Buckner

FINAL FANTASY

Heartland

DOMINO

A year in the making, Owen Pallett emerges with a rock opera

You couldn't invent a musical project with a bigger dweeb pedigree than one whose previous work includes albums based on the "eight schools of magic codified by *Dungeons & Dragons*," or a new work "concerning a young ultra-violent farmer named Lewis and a supreme deity named Owen." And yet, that's just what Toronto composer and Polaris Music Prize-winner Owen Pallett—the man behind solo string project Final Fantasy (its name a nod to the popular video game series)—does on *Heartland*. The record is a 46-minute, 12-track piece for looped violin and voice that owes as much to Brian Eno's ambient instrumental *Tubular Bells* and Andrew Bird's whistled mini-symphonies as it does the more formal terrain of orchestral composition. Pallett is equal parts mathematician and sonic prankster, his compositions scaling the highs and lows of the musical staff like an ADD mountain climber. This infuses songs such as the bouncing "E is For Estranged" and "Oh Heartland, Up Yours!" with a playfulness that belies the potential preciousness lurking beneath their polished surfaces. As a set of songs, *Heartland* has its hits and misses; but as a single work with an admittedly fanciful narrative throughline, it has its own peculiar charms. **COREY DUBROWA** **6.2**

Photo by Ryan Pfluger

Lindstrøm & Christabelle photo by Kim Hiorthoy

LINDSTRØM & CHRISTABELLE

Real Life is No Cool

SMALLTOWN SUPERSOUND/FEEDELITY

Masterful techno producer buffs up his pop chops on new collaboration

Norwegian producer Hans-Peter Lindstrøm's thrilling space disco is endlessly versatile. On 2008's *Where You Go I Go Too*, it stretched out for psychedelic miles. On recent Prins Thomas collaboration *II*, it contorted into prog and funk. And on *Real Life is No Cool*, with vocalist Christabelle (familiar to fans as Solale from a couple Lindstrøm singles), it compresses into baroque electronic pop. Much fizz is generated between synth sequences and instrumentation like glassy piano chords and prickly, palm-muted guitar. Christabelle's vocals were shaped in live jams, and it shows in their engaging spontaneity. Over the spring-wound disco swagger of "Looking for What," a cut-up chorus of reversed Christabelles settles into club-diva murmuring, which in turn gives way to a tense vocal performance that splits the difference between PJ Harvey and The Knife. "Keep it Up" gleams like a lost New Wave classic. *Real Life is No Cool* is a tasteful take on the edgier side of '80s pop radio—like the lucid oddities of Kate Bush—but with a dash of classic soul. **BRIAN HOWE**

7.7

KID SISTER

Ultraviolet

DOWNTOWN RECORDS

Kanye West-approved Chicago rapper finally releases debut

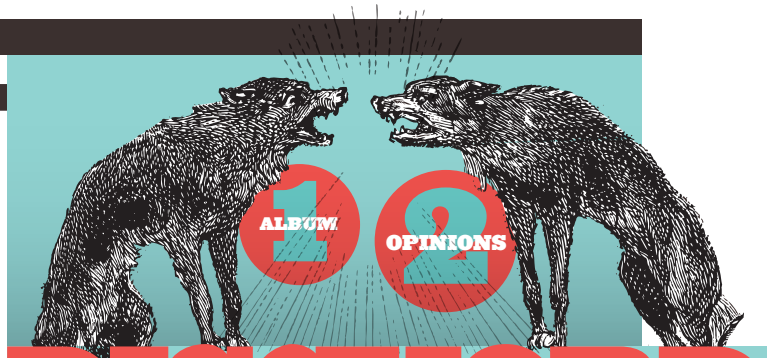
The first words we hear on *Ultraviolet* are, "Hi, I'm Kid Sister." At this point, the introduction is warranted. It's been two years since the Chicago-based rapper/singer made a splash with her Kanye West-assisted single "Pro Nails"—which, in Internet time, makes it feel like a relic on this long-delayed debut. Her next big moment came with a guest spot on "Beeper," by The Count & Sinden, which appeared on an earlier, unreleased version of *Ultraviolet* but is missing here. It's not hard to guess why. Like "Pro Nails," "Beeper" celebrated a status object (a distinctly has-been one, at that), and the pager samples twittering in the beat gave it full novelty-track status. But Kid Sister wants to go wherever you go, not pass through your earbuds in a flash. This reconstituted version of her belabored debut strains to get away from product jingles and change her gimmicky image.

These days, neon ground effects vie for space with strobe lights—and, on *Ultraviolet*, Kid Sister exemplifies pop rap's modern embrace of techno sounds. Slinky new single "Right Hand Hi" is like a less chilled-out version of Kanye's "Flashing Lights"; pinging Euro-synths drive "Big N Bad," "54321" and others. Kid Sis tempers these ear-wormy club bangers with a pugilistic delivery, which comes to the fore on playground battle raps like "Get Fresh," where bouncy boasts ride a spare, blocky track. And her style is as limber as her squeaky voice. She flips New Wave like Santigold on "Daydreaming," featuring Cee-Lo Green, and raps over splashy '80s-style pop in "Life on TV." The subject matter is limited—it covers fame, mating rituals and scrappy braggadocio, all in a playfully superficial way—but the style is resilient.

This owes a lot to the production. You might expect producer A-Trak to be the VIP here, and his "Pro Nails" beat remains direly infectious, but the other beatmakers hold their own against his twitchy yet lucid style.

The album is undeniably solid, so why does it feel faintly underwhelming? Context is key. The record is squarely aimed at pop excellence, but pop moves fast—part of its pleasure derives from the collective energy surge that's happening *right now*. Kid Sister felt timely in 2007, crashing the airwaves alongside another diminutively named female MC with a pop-hop smash about beauty products—anyone remember Lil Mama's "Lip Gloss"? In 2009, even without "Beeper," *Ultraviolet* feels a little behind the curve. **BRIAN HOWE**

5.9



DISCHORD

OK GO

Of the Blue Colour of the Sky

CAPITOL

TREAD AHEAD

Radio-friendly pop bands often struggle to strip bare the trappings and expectations of success and bravely experiment with their sound, but that's what OK Go does on *Of the Blue Colour of the Sky*. Leaving behind the band's ubiquitous treadmill-video gimmick of a few years ago, the new album channels '80s synth pop, overlaid with Damian Kulash's Prince-like vocals alongside '70s rock-guitar riffs and funk, with a smattering of incongruous sound effects. The result, though occasionally bizarre, is a courageous amalgam that gets your head bopping to resoundingly upbeat rhythms and surging bridges, as on the unstoppable "All is Not Lost." "Back from Kathmandu" thumps against clanging drums, and even the dirt-smudged "Needing/Getting," with its odd street-noise sound effects, unexpectedly works. Though there are a few missteps, such as the Auto-Tune-affected "Before the Earth was Round," *Sky* is an inventive, multi-faceted success. **EMILY RIEMER**

TREADS WORN THIN

For its third release, OK Go has created a collection of divisive song sketches instead of an album. Blame the band's mediocrity, or its treadmill stunts in the "Here It Goes Again" video for rendering the music an afterthought; either way, on the shaky foundation of a clever gimmick, OK Go became a big band without the songs to back it up. What's worse, they've bought into their own hype—they plan to shoot a video for every *Blue Colour* song, though not a single new track is as good as the band's most famous single. On this record, OK Go ditches the guitar rock of yore for a funkier post-pop sound, but the grooves feel decidedly thin. Each of the 13 tracks could be a B-side for a different band. Do you like TV On The Radio? Try "Needing/Getting." Prince? Play "Skyscrapers." The Flaming Lips? Check out "In the Glass." Skip buying the album; you'll see it all on YouTube anyway. **JUSTIN JACOBS**

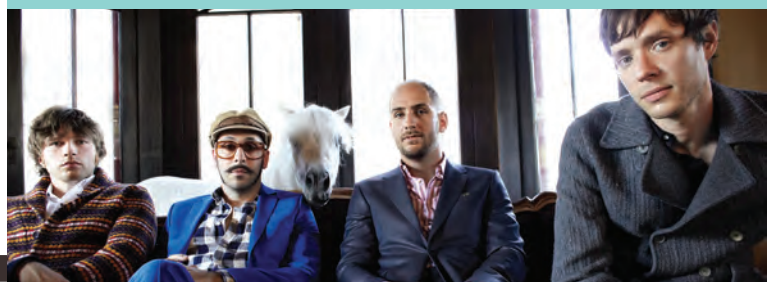


Photo by Jeremy and Claire Weiss

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MILES OF MUSIC

Seventy-one-disc box set gives new meaning to the word "comprehensive"

BY MARK KEMP

MILES DAVIS
The Complete Columbia Album Collection
COLUMBIA/LEGACY

At the end of 1967's *Miles Smiles*, the second great album from Miles Davis' second great quintet, the trumpeter's gravelly voice emerges from "Gingerbread Boy" like HAL from *2001: A Space Odyssey:* "Teo, play that," he hisses to producer/saxophonist Teo Macero in a slight singsong. "Teo, Teo, Teo, Teo—play that."

Macero had produced Davis' earlier classics, including 1959's *Kind of Blue*, but by the late '60s the trumpet giant and his new quintet—saxophonist Wayne Shorter, pianist Herbie Hancock, bassist Ron Carter and drummer Tony Williams—were entering a whole new realm where jazz would collide with funk, rock and the avant-garde. Macero, like The Beatles' George Martin, would help Davis get there. Within three years, Macero was cutting up tape and reassembling it, creating themes and transitions for landmarks of electric jazz-fusion such as *In a Silent Way* and *Bitches Brew*. Listening to Davis' entire Columbia Records output today, it's hard to believe the same guy who bebopped with Charlie Parker in the late '40s would blast off into space with jazz-rock guitarist John McLaughlin two decades later and then cover Cyndi Lauper in the '80s. And yet the sound of his trumpet—whether muted or raw—remains constant throughout, as does the darkly chaotic vibe he created with each new crew of musicians.

Since his death in 1991, Davis' most important Columbia albums have been expanded, remixed, repackaged, boxed and served back in wildly different configurations: complete recordings with Gil Evans, complete recordings with John Coltrane, the complete *Kind of Blue*, *Bitches Brew* and *On the Corner* sessions. It's easy to forget that this music was initially released chronologically as painstakingly edited LPs, and that those LPs made such a profound impact on music—not just in jazz but in pop, rock, funk, hip-hop and electronica.

That's what makes Legacy's latest and most ambitious Davis project such a treat. *The Complete Columbia Album Collection* compiles his 52 Columbia albums—as originally edited—onto 70 CDs, adds a DVD of a 1967 concert, and includes a 250-page booklet with photos, a lengthy bio, an annotated discography and a song index. Each disc comes in a miniature LP jacket with the original artwork. While some discs include extra tracks, there's none of the alternate takes or studio chatter of the "sessions" releases, and no complete concert recordings such as the mammoth eight-CD *Live at the Plugged Nickel 1965* set released in 1995. Hearing these albums in their original forms, we get a more accurate picture of how Davis helped chart the course of late-20th-century jazz.

When he signed to Columbia in 1955, he'd already been recording and performing for about a decade, and helped move jazz into its cool era. But he didn't begin making his biggest impact until he put together his revolutionary first great quintet—saxophonist John Coltrane, pianist Red Garland, bassist Paul Chambers and drummer Philly Joe Jones—for his Columbia debut, *'Round About Midnight*. A master at assembling the right combinations of musicians, Davis continually tweaked his lineups and reached several peaks on Columbia in the late '50s. With *Kind of Blue*, he created a sensuous, brooding modal-jazz masterpiece accessible to pop fans (with no small debt to pianist Bill Evans). On *Porgy and Bess* and *Sketches of Spain*, he teamed with arranger Gil Evans for sets exploring classical and ethnic styles. By the early '60s, he was putting some of his most exciting live performances on wax, most notably *My Funny Valentine*, a 1964 engagement at Lincoln Center that remains one of the greatest live jazz albums.

But it was Davis' '70s period—when the civil unrest of the previous decade turned to simmering anger and righteous pride—that both galvanized and polarized jazz and rock crowds. To jazz purists, *Bitches Brew* wasn't "real jazz." To rock fans, the sounds on that album—and follow-ups like *A Tribute to Jack Johnson*, *On the Corner* and his live sets recorded at rock venues like the Fillmore—were either inscrutable or the very essence of what they'd been looking for in acts as diverse as James Brown, Sly Stone, Jimi Hendrix, Cream and the Grateful Dead: pure, African-based avant-psychedelic mayhem. This period laid the groundwork for the ambient and techno music DJs would explore two decades later.

By the early '80s, Davis had stopped working with Macero and had left Columbia for Warner Brothers. While he dabbled in synth-funk on final Columbia albums like *Decoy*, and began expressing an interest in hip-hop, he never got a chance to adequately realize this new direction before his death at 65. His revolutionary work was behind him anyway, and all of that can be found here.

9.7

MARK KEMP IS AN AUTHOR AND MUSIC JOURNALIST LIVING IN CHARLOTTE, N.C.

Photo by Bob Cato / Sony Music Archives

KRAFTWERK

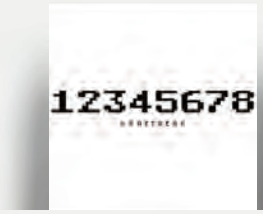
12345678

The Catalogue

EMI

A case study of the blurry lines between humanity and techonolgy

Despite portraying themselves as cold, clinical, precise machinery, Germany's Kraftwerk was vague and indeterminable enough to be everything to everybody. Afrika Bambaataa and hip-hop claimed them as their own, as did Iggy Pop and David Bowie; same goes for the dance floors of house and techno, not to mention the New Romantics and anyone in the last 40 years who has deployed drum machines and synths to mimic human sentiment. Kraftwerk's music has always studied the increasingly blurry lines between humanity and technology, carefully wrapping trenchant observations in winsome, electrified lullabies that merge classical structures to electro-pop brevity. *Autobahn* and *Trans Europe Express* sang—alright, detachedly *intoned*—of peoples' travels and the paths of electronic rhythm, and albums like *Radio-Activity* and *Computer World* explored telecommunications and the spread of computer technology. While '80s entry *Electric Cafe* and 1991's *The Mix* remain fun if meager offerings (and, while the band's continued disregard and non-digitalization of their groundbreaking first two albums remains a travesty), this set reminds us that we too are the robots. **ANDY BETA** **8.7**



NIRVANA

Live at Reading

UNIVERSAL/DGC

The most influential band of the '90s at its gloriously grungy peak

In an age where Twitter feeds, YouTube footage and blogs like Brooklyn Vegan guarantee over-documentation of any concert mere moments after the lights go up, the official release of Nirvana's headlining performance at the 1992 Reading Festival feels at once indescribable and quaint. At this August concert, frontman Kurt Cobain appeared in a hospital gown and wheelchair before unleashing an incandescent and triumphant performance of nearly every song from *Nevermind* (with a switcheroo of "Teen Spirit" and Boston's "More Than a Feeling" for good measure), a few from *Bleach* and the bittersweet "All Apologies" (dedicated to his 12-day-old daughter). Captured at the zenith of their live powers, this victory lap remains many things: the band's final live performance in the U.K., *Kerrang!*'s #1-ranked show for "100 Gigs That Shook the World," and that exact moment when Nirvana lorded over all. **ANDY BETA** **9.5**

CITIZEN MCKAY

Newcomer upstages teen heartthrob in Richard Linklater's latest

BY ROBERT DAVIS

ME AND ORSON WELLES

IN THEATRES NOW

DIRECTOR: Richard Linklater
WRITERS: Holly Gent Palmo, Vince Palmo Jr. (novel by Robert Kaplow)
STARRING: Christian McKay, Claire Danes, Zac Efron
CINEMATOGRAPHER: Dick Pope
STUDIO/RUN TIME: Freestyle Releasing, 113 mins.

Zac Efron is ostensibly the star of *Me and Orson Welles*—he has the biggest name, at least, thanks to his role in *High School Musical*. But he plays the nondescript pronoun in the film's title, not the bigger-than-life dynamo who wraps pre-war New York City around his little finger. That role belongs to little-known Christian McKay, who steals every scene as a 22-year-old Orson Welles.

It's 1937, and Welles stands astride his corner of the world as if it's an empire. He hasn't yet made a feature film, but he recently staged an audacious version of *Macbeth* in Harlem, currently stars in a popular dramatic radio series, and is feverishly working on a Broadway production of *Julius Caesar* with his newly formed acting company. His Shakespearean credentials are clearly secondary to his boundless capacity for showmanship—he reset *Macbeth* in Haiti, and now he's putting his *Caesar* actors in modern military dress, which in 1937 is a flourish designed to turn heads.

When novice actor Richard Samuels, played by Efron, bumps into Welles on the street, the director gives him a part in his new play based on little more than a hunch. Samuels then becomes our usher into the theater world, the fly caught in Welles' web, wide-eyed and sure to be devoured.

The most likely adjective to appear in all the reviews written about McKay's performance is "uncanny." Not only does he look and sound like Welles—with the cocked eyebrow, the grin and the booming jokes—but he also captures the mad energy surrounding a man who always seems to be performing, a man who expects people to cow to his unwavering brilliance. With sleight of hand, he produces roses from matchsticks; with force of will, he produces high art from weary actors. Or at least that's how he sees it.

Director Richard Linklater—consistently good if increasingly unpredictable—appears to give as much thought to art-house favorites like *Before Sunset* as he does more popular fare like *School of Rock*, and he never seems constrained by a film's budget, regardless of size. Despite a budget of less than $25 million, *Me and Orson Welles* looks as glossy as any big studio production, an illusion created largely by clever staging. Much of the action takes place inside a theater, every city's portal into the past; cover up the modern speaker systems in front of any old stage, and you may as well be in late-'30s New York. Cinematographer Dick Pope, who shot most of Mike Leigh's films, gives the picture an appropriately clean, bronze-colored glow.

Linklater has assembled a cast of strong character actors, notably Eddie Marsan (the crazy driving instructor in *Happy-Go-Lucky*) as producer John Houseman, James Tupper as actor Joseph Cotten, and Claire Danes as the fictional Sonja Jones, one-third of the romantic triangle that develops around our young thespian. Each of these folks is more distinctive than the void that is "Me." Efron is fine, but as written and acted his character is mostly a passive observer, and it's easy to tire of him when he, not Welles, is summoned to inch the plot forward.

The characters all evaluate their jobs on a minute-by-minute basis to see if Welles is worth the trouble. The ego, the insults, the sudden changes, the capricious bluster—watching *Me and Orson Welles* gives a palpable sense of how confusing it must have been to fall under the man's spell. Those moments when we wish for him to return to screen probably mirror the times when his actors waited for their mercurial leader to grace them with his presence. He's late for rehearsal, but his magnetism cures all.

One of the film's best moments provides a glimpse of another project Welles is working on in his spare time: a marked-up radio script for *The Magnificent Ambersons*. Conventional wisdom considers Welles a young firebrand whose debut film, *Citizen Kane*, is still widely regarded as one of the greatest ever made, but whose hard-headedness caused him to peak early. The truth is somewhat different. He continued to make movies throughout his life but had increasing difficulty financing them. Later works like *The Trial* and *The Immortal Story*, however, show a filmmaker who has experienced no artistic decline, even if the market said otherwise. So the nod to *Ambersons*—and not *Kane*—is also a subtle recognition to all of the above. *Ambersons* is one of his great films, but the studio took it away and shot a new ending, inaugurating the refrain that would echo through his career: What might have been?

Finally, the fact that Linklater used British money (and filmed in London and the Isle of Man) to make a movie about a great American artist highlights the present financial situation for small films—even invigorating works that star popular young actors. For good filmmakers, the current climate is as challenging as it was in 1937.

7.3

Photo by Kerry Brown, courtesy of Sony Pictures Classics

➥ ROBERT DAVIS IS *PASTE*'S CHIEF FILM CRITIC.

THE YOUNG VICTORIA

IN THEATERS NOW

DIRECTOR: Jean-Marc Vallée
WRITER: Julian Fellowes
CINEMATOGRAPHER: Hagen Bogdanski
STARRING: Emily Blunt, Rupert Friend, Jim Broadbent, Paul Bettany, Miranda Richardson
STUDIO/RUN TIME: Sony Pictures Entertainment, 100 mins.

Blunt dazzles as British royalty in well-executed period piece

She was the snooty girl in *The Devil Wears Prada*, the hot date in *Dan in Real Life*, the funny sister in *Sunshine Cleaning* and the alluring daughter in *Charlie Wilson's War*. Now Emily Blunt steps into her first major leading role, dazzling and delighting in period piece *The Young Victoria*. Mostly set in the 1830s and '40s, this beautifully shot film follows the ascension of the teenage Victoria as she becomes Queen of England, a reign that lasts over 60 years. Blunt elegantly and assuredly executes the transformation from overprotected child to groundbreaking monarch. The supporting cast includes Jim Broadbent who, as King William, steals each of the few scenes in which he appears; Miranda Richardson, who's wonderfully distressing as the mother Victoria purges from her life; and Rupert Friend, who serves dutifully as Victoria's adoring Prince Albert. Although *The Young Victoria* ends too soon and leaves many a subplot unresolved, Emily Blunt's performance won't soon be forgotten. **TIM BASHAM** 7.8

UP IN THE AIR

IN THEATRES NOW

DIRECTOR: Jason Reitman
WRITERS: Sheldon Turner, Reitman (novel by Walter Kim)
STARRING: George Clooney, Jason Bateman, Anna Kendrick, Vera Farmiga
CINEMATOGRAPHER: Eric Steelberg
STUDIO/RUN TIME: Paramount Pictures, 109 mins.

Despite some fine acting, young director's third film is uneven and formulaic

Jason Reitman has only made three feature films, but his work is already falling into familiar patterns. His first two films, *Thank You for Smoking* and *Juno*, were slickly produced, but the surface niceties were bolstered by sharp satire in the former and heartfelt emotion in the latter. His third, *Up in the Air*, seems calculated to backfill both the satire and the emotion before starting with a good story.

Ryan Bingham (George Clooney) lives his life traveling, and he loves it, even though his job is to fire workers for employers who can't break the news themselves. The gig's a downer, but at least he gets to *fly*. Jason Bateman plays his remote boss, Vera Farmiga plays a fellow traveler, and when these actors pair off they're fantastic.

Eventually Reitman aims higher than crackling dialogue and well-dressed wit, but he gets there only by asking us to think less. After fetishizing Bingham's cold efficiency with a security-gate montage, the film stages unconvincing set pieces that alternately try to hinge the film's tension on either the possibility that his job will go away or that his solitary life is meaningless. The paean to family life strikes a nice chord, and I appreciate the way the film avoids a simple resolution, but I'm not sure Reitman himself believes the message. He's stretching, and the contrivances make *Up in the Air* feel like a cynical, manipulative bid for accolades, ghoulishly timed to take flight during the worst economy in decades. **ROBERT DAVIS** 6.4

FILM

THAT EVENING SUN

IN THEATRES NOW

DIRECTOR: Scott Teems
WRITERS: Teems, (short story by William Gay)
CINEMATOGRAPHER: Rodney Taylor
STARRING: Hal Holbrook, Raymond McKinnon, Carrie Preston, Mia Wasikowska, Walton Goggins, Barry Corbin
STUDIO/RUN TIME: Freestyle Releasing, 110 mins.

Holbrook's crowning moment comes in truly Southern film

Scott Teems' *That Evening Sun* is an exquisitely crafted adaptation of a William Gay short story that's fundamentally rooted in the real-world South, a subtle little wonder in which every single element works. Music from Michael Penn and Drive-By Trucker Patterson Hood sets the portentous mood; character actors Raymond McKinnon, Walton Goggins and Barry Corbin play their supporting roles to perfection, and up-and-comer Mia Wasikowska is excellent. But the real surprise is 84-year-old Hal Holbrook, who gives the best performance of his 55-year career.

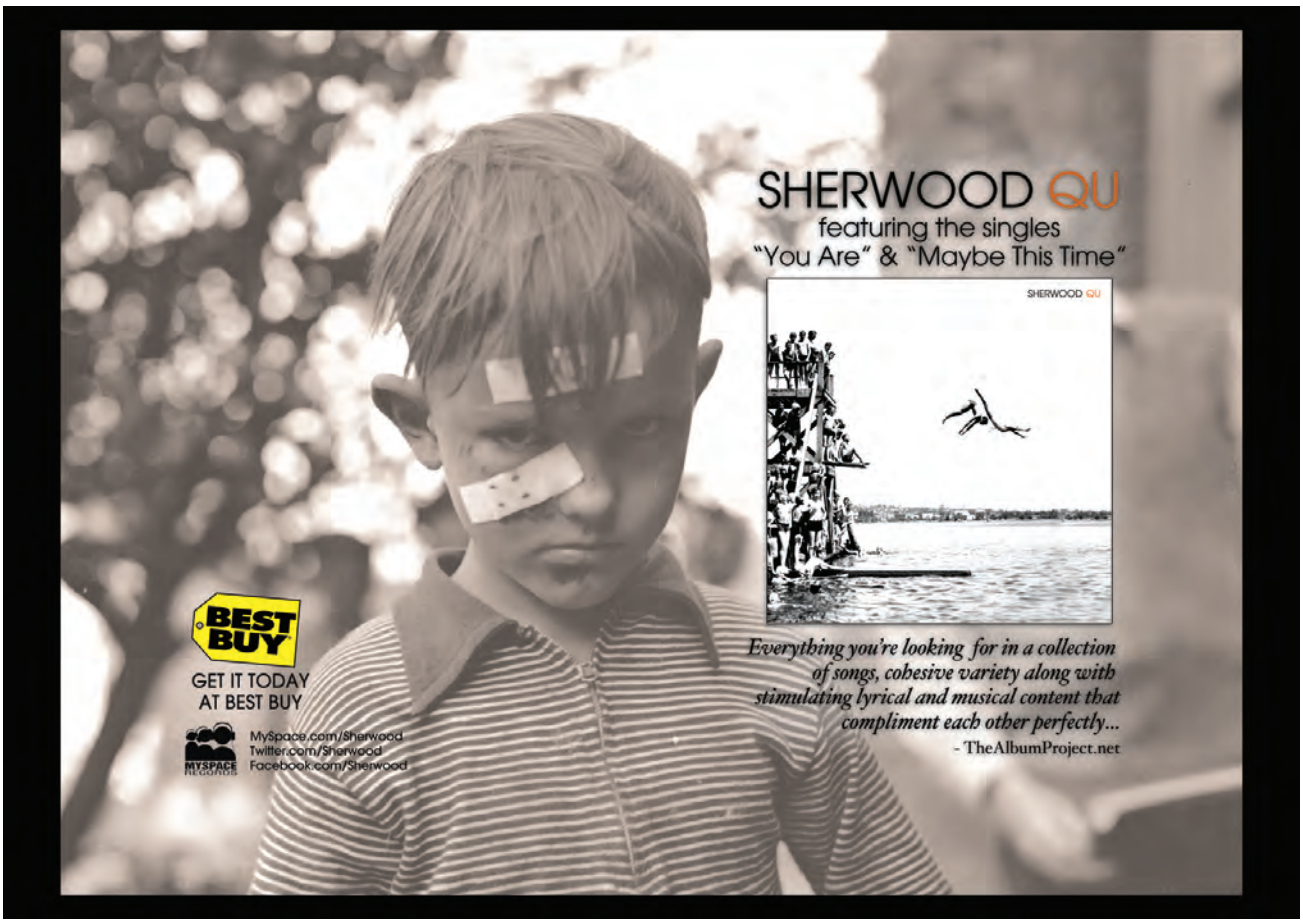
He's in nearly every scene as Abner Meecham, an octogenarian who literally walks away from a three-month stint in a nursing home only to find his farm rented out to his arch enemy, Lonzo Choat. As he engages Choat in an escalating grudge match to regain his land, Abner is every bit as gruff and craggy as Clint Eastwood in *Gran Torino*, but Holbrook's silent pauses speak as much as his words.

In a story that begs for stock villains, none appear. McKinnon's Lonzo is a surly, menacing drunk, and could easily have become a familiar caricature: the low-class redneck antagonist. But he rages so hard against perceptions—both others' and his own—of himself as a failure that he becomes a figure of real pathos. Actress Carrie Preston imbues his wife, Ludie, with such an earnestness and fundamental decency that it's hard not to see Lonzo through her eyes, as just another lost soul trying to find his way. Similarly, Abner's son Paul (Goggins), could easily have been painted as the stereotypical big-city lawyer and uncaring child, but there's complexity even in his short time on-screen.

This jewel from Teems should land Holbrook another Oscar nomination after his supporting role for *Into the Wild* in 2007. And with any justice, the trophies for this film won't end there.

MICHAEL DUNAWAY 9.1

That Evening Sun photo by Cooper Dunn. L-R: Carrie Preston, Mia Wasikowska, Hal Holbrook.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THE ROAD

IN THEATRES NOW

DIRECTOR: John Hillcoat
WRITERS: Joe Penhall, (novel by Cormac McCarthy)
CINEMATOGRAPHER: Javier Aguirresarobe
STARRING: Viggo Mortensen, Kodi Smit-McPhee, Charlize Theron
STUDIO/RUN TIME: Dimension Films, 113 mins.

Faithful adaptation paves way for heart-rending performances

Within the first 15 minutes of *The Road*, Viggo Mortensen's nameless survivor finds himself defending his son (Kodi Smit-McPhee) from a pedophilic cannibal, then washing said predator's splattered brains from the boy's hair. This combination of unflinching brutality and father-of-the-year tenderness lies at the heart of the latest film inspired by Cormac McCarthy's apocaliterature, and the result is a victory in every sense. Mortensen's performance humanizes the experience; when his voice desperately creeps through the narration, "All I know is the child is my warrant and if he is not the word of God, then God never spoke," the starved frontier stops being a science-fiction convention and expands into a portrait of enduring hope.

But the real star—and omnipotent villain—is director John Hillcoat's geographic skeleton of a world, stranding its travelers in a horizon of bleached Appalachian ruins and physical entropy. Ultimately, the only thing more extreme than these desolate visuals is the father's desperate love, and both merge harmoniously to make this difficult journey worth the emotional toll. **SEAN EDGAR**

8.8

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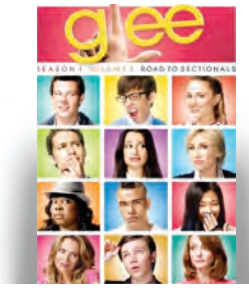
Fox hit big on songs, bigger on duh-*rama!*

BY RACHAEL MADDUX

GLEE: SEASON 1, VOL. 1

DVD RELEASE DATE: DEC. 29, 2009

CREATORS: Ian Brennan, Brad Falchuk, Ryan Murphy
STARRING: Lea Michele, Dianna Agron, Chris Colfer, Jane Lynch, Matthew Morrison
NETWORK: Fox



I've never been to Lima, Ohio, which sits halfway between Toledo and Dayton, but I've seen it on TV. It's where Fox's new series, *Glee*—which premiered in September—is set, specifically, at the fictional William McKinley High School. Aside from one character with big-city dreams referring to it as a "cow town," *Glee* doesn't spend much time characterizing its setting, but from watching the first half of the first season—now available on DVD—I've pieced together an idea of what life there might be like.

Lima seems an incredibly diverse city for its size (real-life population 38,000), with McKinley High in particular boasting a student body that resembles the human cast of Sesame Street more than any bunch of small-town high schoolers I've ever known. It's big on football and not so much the arts, though it seems to have some money to spare, because even the members of McKinley's Glee Club—whose daily dramas (more offstage than on) comprise the bulk of the show—enjoy ample practice space and faculty support. In town, there's a Target, a few restaurants, an autoshop. No one seems too rich or too poor, but everyone does seem absolutely miserable.

Take thirtysomething Spanish teacher Will Schuester, whose work as Glee Club director is constantly besot by Sue Sylvester (an über-competitive cheerleading coach, played by a brilliantly unhinged Jane Lynch, who can't bear the idea of choir kids stealing her squad's thunder), and whose marriage is constantly tested by his affection for doe-eyed, germophobic guidance counselor Emma Pillsbury. Meanwhile, at home, Will and his wife Terri face the terror of first-time parenthood, though Terri isn't actually pregnant, just planning to fake it for nine months and buy a baby from one of her husband's students. That would be Quinn Fabray, lead cheerleader, who joined Glee to spy for Sue and stayed on for reasons unclear. Quinn is trying desperately to hide her own all-too-real pregnancy from everyone except her footballer boyfriend, Finn Hudson (also in Glee, despite himself), who she's led to believe is the father even though they've never had sex. (Quinn's explanation alludes to their recent make-out sesh in a hot tub and hints at one more fact about Lima, Ohio—it's maybe not so much into the sex education.) Finn has never had sex with Rachel Berry either, who'd prefer it otherwise, and is trying to establish her de-facto star status among the Glee nerds without them openly despising her.

Some of the kids' troubles can't be helped—among the choirmates, one guy's in a wheelchair, one girl has a stutter and several are almost too airheaded to function (more likely due to bad writing than extenuating personal circumstance). The cherub-faced Kurt Hummel—played with admirable pathos and grace by Chris Colfer, who could've easily buckled under the weight of the show's entire gayness quotient being heaped upon his delicate shoulders—has to grapple with his painfully flamboyant homosexuality at home and at school. But most of the characters' wounds are self-inflicted, the natural consequences of self-serving lies and deliberate manipulations of friends, family and co-workers. There are some exceptions, some challenges and conflicts parlayed into teaching moments with all the saccharine wisdom of an after-school special. But, for the most part, every moment of character development is merely an excuse to unveil another dark layer of these people we're supposed to identify with, root for—even love. For a show so obviously intended as recession-era escapism, this is not a compliment.

Thank God, then, for the musical numbers. In pitch-perfect, ostensibly off-the-cuff rehearsal scenes; ridiculous fantasy sequences featuring cast members wandering through the school halls with wind-tunnel hair; and in every episode's big onstage blowout, the cast delivers note-for-note. The cast's Broadway chops readily apparent in their slick, studied deliveries, and while they tackle the occasional showtune, they deal most satisfyingly in sticky-sweet pop fare—like Journey's "Don't Stop Believin'," Beyonce's "Single Ladies (Put A Ring On It)" and Salt-N-Pepa's "Push It."

> The performances require some suspension of disbelief, but *Glee* leaves you wanting nothing more than to divorce yourself from reality.

The performances require some suspension of disbelief (Didn't they just lay eyes on that sheet music five seconds ago? Where'd those costumes come from? Who's running the lights? Who from this arts-hating cow town paid for this fancy theater?), but *Glee* leaves you wanting nothing more than to divorce yourself from reality—specifically, the one the show has created for itself. When you're craving an escape from your escapism, it's time to exit stage left.

5.1

Photo courtesy of Fox

RACHAEL MADDUX IS *PASTE*'S ASSISTANT EDITOR AND A RECOVERING COW-TOWN HIGH SCHOOL DRAMA NERD.

PARIS, TEXAS

RELEASE DATE: JAN. 26

DIRECTOR: Wim Wenders
WRITER: Sam Shepard, L.M. Kit Carson
CINEMATOGRAPHER: Robby Müller
STARRING: Harry Dean Stanton, Nastassja Kinski, Dean Stockwell
STUDIO/RUN TIME: Criterion Collection, 147 mins.

Cinematic masterpiece reminds of Wenders' bleak, unique vision of America

"You look like 40 miles of rough road," esteems Walt Henderson (Dean Stockwell) after picking up his estranged brother in a Texas border town. That rutted, haggard visage belongs to Harry Dean Stanton's Travis Henderson, who has stumbled out of the desert after abandoning his family four years earlier. In a career-redefining performance by Stanton, 1984's epochal Palme d'Or-winning *Paris, Texas* also placed West German director Wim Wenders at the fore of the decade's art-house cinema, a position later cemented by *Wings of Desire*. Harrowing yet nuanced, breath-catching and heart-rending, infused with a humanity rarely captured on celluloid, none of the film's emotional power has dimmed in the last quarter-century. No wonder it was reportedly a favorite of everyone from Kurt Cobain to Elliott Smith, and an artistic touchstone for U2's *The Joshua Tree*. This pristine new transfer by Criterion restores Müller's washes of flashing red neon and green light, and revealed Wenders' vision of an emotionally estranged America. **9.6**

ANDY BETA

ANDY BARKER, P.I.

AVAILABLE NOW

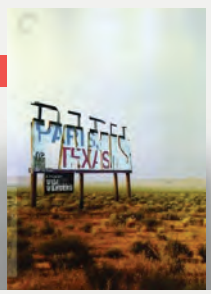
CREATORS: Conan O'Brien, Jonathan Groff
STARRING: Andy Richter, Tony Hale, Clea Lewis, Harve Presnell, Mashall Manesh
STUDIO/LENGTH: Shout! Factory, 132 mins.

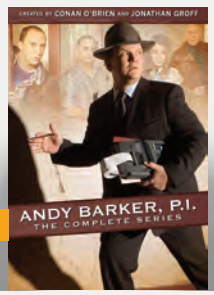
Short-lived detective spoof showed promise but never had time to develop

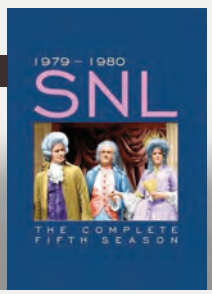
Andy Barker, P.I. is all about what happens when you take clichéd murder-mystery investigations and make someone other than Sam Spade or Philip Marlowe the detective. The titular P.I., played to perfection by longtime Conan O'Brien sidekick Andy Richter, is fascinatingly boring—an accountant by trade, Barker is both highly unqualified and highly uninterested in solving crimes. In his heart, he'll always prefer Form 140s to femme fatales.

Despite O'Brien's influence, *Barker* had no real chance of surviving. Its comedy was too niche to find much of an audience. A few episodes are excellent, but there's not much consistency. The show was still finding its tone when it was cut, and never had the chance to grab even a cult following. For such a talented cast and crew working around such a unique premise, it's unfortunate—more because of what could've been than what was. **7.1**

SEAN GANDERT







SATURDAY NIGHT LIVE: THE COMPLETE FIFTH SEASON

AVAILABLE NOW

CREATOR: Lorne Michaels
STARRING: Bill Murray, Jane Curtin, Gilda Radner, Garrett Morris, Harry Shearer
STUDIO: NBC

Still not ready for primetime

By its fifth season, *SNL* needed a shot in the arm—instead, it had the limb lopped off completely. In 1980, producer Lorne Michaels and the Not Ready for Primetime Players quit over a contract dispute and were replaced by a new cast that included Eddie Murphy, Joe Piscopo and, um, Charles Rocket? The shakeup ushered in the first dark period in the show's long history, but in retrospect it was completely necessary—*SNL* had sunk into the rote formula that survives today. Most of the biggest names—Chevy Chase, John Belushi and Dan Akroyd—had already graduated to films, and instead of relying on strong players like Gilda Radner and Garrett Morris, the show entrusted Bill Murray and Harry Shearer to carry most of the sketches. On Weekend Update, Jane Curtin lacks the tense rapport with Murray that she had with the caustic Akroyd, although a young Al Franken shines in his few appearances. But even when the laughs flag, the musical guests remains strong, including late-Christian-period Dylan, up-and-comers Blondie, and the wonderfully weird B-52's, who give one of most manic performances in the show's history. **6.2**

STEPHEN M. DEUSNER

The General photo courtesy of Kino International

WHAT'S SO FUNNY ABOUT PEACE, LOVE AND CENSORSHIP?

TV critic fills in details of historic primetime battle

BY NICK A. ZAINO III

DAVID BIANCULLI

Dangerously Funny: The Uncensored Story of "The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour"

[NONFICTION] TOUCHSTONE

The Smothers Brothers occupy a strange space in the history of pop culture. Battles with network censors over their groundbreaking variety series, *The Smothers Brothers Comedy Hour*, are the stuff of legend. By the time the Smothers got fired in 1969 (they bristle at the notion that the show was cancelled), *Comedy Hour* had become a benchmark for political expression and satire in prime time.

Retelling the story often over-simplifies it—Tom and Dick Smothers spoke out on the air against the Vietnam War and poked fun at politicians, then they were silenced by the big corporate powers. But NPR television critic David Bianculli's new history gives a full account with 360 pages of devilish details.

Bianculli devotes the bulk of his work to the period when *Comedy Hour* was conceived, produced and ultimately

removed from its Sunday-night slot, leaving only a few chapters on Tom and Dick Smothers' career before and after the show. This feels right—the best stories are the increasingly dramatic week-to-week battles between the idealistic, strong-willed Tom Smothers and CBS censors and brass.

At the outset, CBS thought they had a couple of clean-cut kids who would book older acts like Kate Smith and Jack Benny, yet still appeal to a younger crowd. Tom wanted the show to be more socially conscious, but misunderstood the amount of creative control he and Dick were given in their agreement with the network. Without clear terms for what was acceptable, every network-deleted scene became increasingly frustrating to Tom Smothers, who began to wage a war of his own against the network.

Some battles were small, even playful. Tom and the writers would often slip the nonsense phrase "rowing to Galveston" into a script and instruct the cast and crew to laugh loudly. The censors always cut it, fearing some new offensive slang term.

Then battles grew bigger and more meaningful. The censors cut would-be offensive lines here and there, then whole sketches and songs. The network allowed the long-blacklisted Pete Seeger on the show, but cut his anti-war anthem, "Waist Deep in the Big Muddy." Tom got that one back in, but had to fight again for Harry Belafonte's performance of "Don't Stop the Carnival," featuring a backdrop of footage from the recent Democratic National Convention, complete with riot scenes.

CBS got letters from viewers complaining that the Brothers were un-American. President Lyndon Johnson requested, through a friend at the network, that the Smothers tread lightly. Ethel Kennedy took exception to a sketch that made light of husband Robert F. Kennedy's indecision about running for president. The barbs at Richard Nixon were especially pointed—Tom Smothers swears that Nixon had a direct hand in the show's demise, and while Bianculli admits he never found a "smoking gun" to prove it, he does offer some incriminating coincidences.

The book reaches a fever pitch with Bianculli's fascinating blow-by-blow account of the final days of the *Comedy Hour*—the flurry of memos and gamesmanship that forced the Smothers off the air and threw them into a years-long career funk.

> Bianculli draws a lineage from the Smothers' faux presidential candidate Pat Paulsen up through Andy Kaufman, *The Daily Show* and Stephen Colbert.

Bianculli, to his credit, doesn't let the gripping censorship battle overshadow the fact that *Comedy Hour* was a fantastic and influential show. "It's not that much of a stretch to imagine Tom Smothers, not Lorne Michaels of *Saturday Night Live*, as the tenured tastemaker, in both comedy and music, for a new generation of TV viewer," he writes.

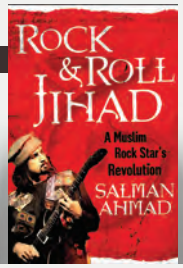
Bianculli draws a lineage from the Smothers' faux presidential candidate Pat Paulsen up through Andy Kaufman, *The Daily Show* and Stephen Colbert. He illuminates the writer's room, which included Rob Reiner, Steve Martin and "Gentle On My Mind" composer John Hartford. And he highlights Tom Smothers' quest for new musical talent, his music scouts Mason Williams and Pat Paulson bringing Jefferson Airplane, The Who and The Doors to the show before most of America knew who they were.

In the book, Tom Smothers says that he and Dick would like to do one more TV show. The brothers went through couples counseling (literally), and they've had decades to hone their performance skills. The thought of this comedic team on the airwaves once again is a wistful way to end the story, a wonderful "what if."

8.2

➥ NICK A. ZAINO III IS A FREELANCE WRITER AND FREQUENT CONTRIBUTOR TO *THE BOSTON GLOBE*, COVERING STAND-UP COMEDY AND THE ARTS.

Photo by Summer Davis



RAJ PATEL

The Value of Nothing: How to reshape market society and redefine democracy

[NON-FICTION] PICADOR

A common cause

Questioning property rights, Oxford-educated World Bank veteran Patel explores the accelerating contemporary trend toward "enclosures," which he sees as stolen benefits that actually belong to the public. "A genuine democracy," he writes, involves "moving beyond ownership to stewardship to commoning."

Patel feels that corporations dismiss the harmful effects of their operations as "negative externalities"—economists jargon for unaccountability of true costs. The free market is supposed to render costs accurately. Patel argues that, in fact, market costs are totally unrepresentative of real costs. A four-dollar hamburger hides untold resource costs kept off the books. Toxic waste dumped off poor countries' shores? Another failure to measure human costs.

According to Patel, a straight line can be drawn from re-measuring the value of what we consider nothing to enhanced commons rights—the "right to have rights." This book is a worthy effort to persuade readers that property can, or must, become social again. **ANIS SHIVANI** 8.5

ALEKSANDER HEMON (ED.)

Best European Fiction 2010

[FICTION]

DALKEY ARCHIVE PRESS

Anthology of contemporary Euro-fiction long overdue

Aleksandar Hemon begins his introduction to *Best European Fiction 2010* by citing the sad statistic that translations account for less than five percent of the literature published in the United States. This is the first anthology of its kind, and after reading it you may be so furious that such quality work has been kept from you that you'll repeat that stat to anyone who'll listen.

Historical privileges aren't reconstituted with this anthology, which represents Russia and England alongside Estonia and Albania, and which includes both known and previously untranslated writers. Inventiveness reigns in short stories and novel excerpts: Jean-Philippe Toussaint studies an infamous footballer in "Zidane's Melancholy"; the brief pieces by Antonio Fian, "Some Short Stories After Dreams," are haunting and visual.

The common ground in this collection (acknowledged in Zadie Smith's preface) is not a European agenda, but good writing essential to understanding our world. **ALICIA KENNEDY** 9.0

SALMAN AHMAD

Rock & Roll Jihad

[NON-FICTION] FREE PRESS

Rocking the casbah

In *Rock & Roll Jihad*, Salman Ahmad—once an unassuming teenager playing guitar in a suburban New York garage band—chronicles his transformation from Pakistani medical student to world-renowned musician.

Ahmad now uses the music of his band, Junoon, to bridge borders and find common ground between feuding societies. As relayed in the book, his life brims with the pop-cultural experiences that mark his journey from the Beatlesque optimism of his early career to a more recent Dylan-inspired political agenda. With a cast and crew of multiethnic characters and influences including pop icons such as Bono, professional athletes and national leaders, his writing at times seems like lists of trivia. But Ahmad takes great care to include individuals with a lasting impact on his life. In the end, the book dwells heavily on his personal musings on fame and cultural conflicts—such as his accusation that Muslims don't play rock music—becoming more about the man than the music. **JESSICA HUNT** 7.6

Raj Patel photo by Andrea Ismert

SHIFTING GEARS

What happens when the world realizes it doesn't need speed so much after all?

BY GARRETT MARTIN

NEED FOR SPEED: SHIFT

DEVELOPER: SLIGHTLY MAD STUDIOS
PUBLISHER: ELECTRONIC ARTS
PLATFORMS: PLAYSTATION 3, PSP, XBOX 360, PC, MOBILE, IPHONE

Though not struggling as spectacularly as the American auto industry, the long-running *Need for Speed* series has steadily lost ground to competitors. Recent installments have felt tired and passé, especially when played alongside more inspired games like *Burnout Paradise*. While aimless circling is a vital part of any racing simulator, that shouldn't apply to a game's trajectory.

Need for Speed: Shift breaks from this wayward path. Instead of pumping out another slightly altered iteration in the face of increasing critical and commercial indifference, Electronic Arts has hit the garage and overhauled the venerable arcade-style racer. *Shift* veers into simulation territory, with a focus on European-style racing using tracks both real and fictional. The police chases and overheated full-motion video cut-scenes of past *Need for Speeds* are out; realistic handling and cockpit views are in.

Also in, of course, are cars—and lots of them. Not just those crazy foreign racecars with names like soccer players, but solid, God-fearing American automobiles like the Camaro and Ford Focus. You can even relive the excitement of your first car and drive the modest yet sensible Honda Civic. I am no transportation fetishist in real life, but I can't deny the affection I've developed for my souped-up Volkswagen Golf in this game—I've tricked out that lime-green-and-vermillion beauty to the point where it can hold its own against the Pagani Zonda (which is apparently a car and not an Italian midfielder). Car customization options unlock in tiers as you progress, allowing you to upgrade the same entry-level vehicle to a high-performance speed demon. The improvements are realistic, with nary a machine gun nor jet rocket in sight. Long after you're bored with racing you'll still love expanding and refining your car's attributes.

Of course, you have to race if you want to upgrade your car. Races earn you both money and stars. Money lets you fix up your car or buy a new one; stars, in *Shift*'s best approximation of *Super Mario*, unlock new levels in the form of events and racing circuits. Get enough stars and eventually you can compete in the NFS World Tour, which might sound prosaic, but it's a better name than anything NASCAR's had since losing Winston as a sponsor.

One pretty big problem, though, is that racing in *Shift* isn't particularly fun. It's an awkward hybrid of arcade action and realistic simulation, and gameplay gets old quickly, despite the number of race types and objectives. In addition to the expected timed clock-busters and specific skill workouts, there are other events that bear the potential for a genuine change of pace, but the optional events are little more than minor tweaks on the basic underwhelming formula. Manufacturer's challenges, where every driver uses the same car, are simply previews of higher-level vehicles; there's a race where the last car to finish a lap is eliminated until only one car remains, but this doesn't require you to think any differently than a normal race. The one truly redeeming extra is the one-on-one mode, where you score points for passing your opponent. It distills the passion and stress of racing into quick bursts of action, and is the best way to play *Shift*.

Need for Speed: Shift is clearly conflicted between its arcade-style roots and half-hearted stabs at realism.

At heart, this is a game clearly torn between its arcade-style roots and half-hearted stabs at realism. It's pivotal to know when to brake and how to handle your car around tight corners and tricky curves, but the game also rewards you for smashing into other cars. *Shift* loves when you cross the line between aggressive driving and road rage, which points to a series that's still somewhat adrift. The new direction is encouraging, but *Need for Speed: Shift* lacks the necessary conviction. How can we believe a game that doesn't believe in itself?

5.9

➥ GARRETT MARTIN IS A FREELANCE WRITER WHOSE WORK HAS APPEARED IN THE *BOSTON HERALD*, BOSTON'S *WEEKLY DIG* AND ATLANTA'S *CREATIVE LOAFING*.

CANABALT

DEVELOPER: ADAM ATOMIC
PLATFORMS: IPHONE, IPOD TOUCH, PC

Deceptively simple indie game will leave you breathless

If the most primal dilemma of human beings is fight-or-flight, the vast majority of games gun for enjoyment of the former. Understandably so—there's a strategic, almost tactile intensity to the simulated clash of two opposing forces. Indie platform-action game *Canabalt*, however, bucks this trend by milking a shocking amount of fun out of a reasonably straightforward flight fantasy. Tap the screen or click to begin your game and a little man sprints down a corridor and leaps through the window of a high-rise building onto a neighboring rooftop.

Your score is measured in meters, and the goal is to run as far as you possibly can along rooftops and construction cranes, jumping (with a simple click) over obstacles and gaps before you either die by misjudging a leap or smashing into a missile warhead lodged in a roof. That's right—your daring escape unfortunately coincides with a futuristic apocalypse. Spaceships rumble by overhead, propelled by massive afterburners; towering bipedal robots in the distance lumber back and forth, laying waste to the city. These images—coupled with a tension-building electronic soundtrack—create a remarkably dense atmosphere. Even if you're too young to get a nostalgic buzz from the Atari-grade pixel size of *Canabalt*'s graphics, the game's action will

keep you coming back for yet another attempt at toppling your previous distance record.

8.7

JASON KILLINGSWORTH

MARIO AND LUIGI: BOWSER'S INSIDE STORY

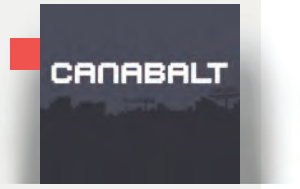
DEVELOPER: ALPHADREAM
PUBLISHER: NINTENDO
PLATFORM: NINTENDO DS

Dig deeper into the Mushroom Kingdom than ever before

At this point, a new Mario game is just an excuse for Nintendo to poke mild fun at itself, in that secretly flattering way only unimpeachable powerhouses can pull off. The company's 28-year-old mascot has hopped through every genre under the sun, including—in the *Mario and Luigi* series—action role-playing. This third entry, *Bowser's Inside Story*, feels like a long-running sitcom, where every character entrance enjoys great fanfare, and all the jokes wink knowingly at prior gags. Nintendo could coast on nostalgia alone, but to its credit, the fuzzy feelings are attached to a very good game in which perennial villain Bowser has inhaled the entire Mushroom Kingdom into his body. You guide him through the world on the top screen, while ushering Mario and Luigi through his body on the bottom. The heroes and villains work in tandem, solving creative puzzles, discovering new skills and fighting familiar monsters with timed button presses—all amid vibrant cartoon scenery. In this case, Nintendo's titanic self-regard feels well deserved.

7.5

BRIAN HOWE



UNGLUED

DISGRACED EXPECTATIONS

BY PAUL J. WILLIAMS | ILLUSTRATION BY STEVE WACKSMAN

We hope you've enjoyed our big 2010 preview! But as Donald Rumsfeld or Jim Cramer will tell you, the problem with being in the prediction business is sometimes you get them wrong.

For every eerily prescient proclamation like, "Perhaps America is not ready for two professional women's basketball leagues," there's a swift kick in the crystal balls like, "The one irreplaceable member of The Beatles is clearly Pete Best."

With that in mind, we delved into our deepest archives, and hereby resurrect our most glaringly inaccurate predictions from over the years.

28,000 B.C. "While we loved Mok The Caveman's debut album, which consisted mainly of him banging a femur against a rock, the addition of a string section is sure to take his sophomore effort to new heights."

1380 "We can't imagine anyone ever getting tired of the bagpipes."

1811 "With the loss of his hearing, Beethoven's best work is certainly behind him."

1892 "Tchaikovsky just revealed his next project, something called *The Nutcracker*, about a wooden soldier fighting a giant rat. After all, nothing says Christmas like giant rats! Expect this one to vanish into obscurity."

1936 "Blues guitarist Robert Johnson should ask the devil for a refund."

1939 "If you take your children to one movie this year, please skip *The Wizard of Oz* and head directly to *Son of Frankenstein*."

1955 "This will be the year Liberace finally settles down with a nice girl."

1960 "Not since Tom Parker started managing Elvis has there been a pairing as fortuitous as Ike and Tina Turner."

1975 "KISS won't ever reach the next level of success while wearing that stupid makeup."

1982 "Michael Jackson's new album, *Thriller*, seems expressly designed to alienate his audience."

1995 "We have heard the future of rock music, and it is named Seven Mary Three."

1998 "One thing is clear from *A Night at the Roxbury*—between Chris Kattan and Will Ferrell, Kattan is the one with a future in comedy."

1999 "The big success story of the long-awaited prequel is sure to be Jar Jar Binks."

2001 "After his latest arrest, the chances of Robert Downey Jr. reviving his career are about the same as Bob Dylan recording a Christmas album."

2002 "If entertainers were stocks, you would have to consider Britney the blue chip and Justin more of a Pets.com right now."

2009 "Great idea, Fox! America has clearly been dying for a show about a glee club. What's next *Student Council: The Series*?"

➥ PAUL J. WILLIAMS IS A WRITER BASED IN VIRGINIA, AND HE'S POSITIVE THIS PIECE WILL EARN HIM MORE WORK FROM *PASTE*.

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SXSW INTERACTIVE

danah boyd to deliver Opening Remarks March 13, 2010. For a complete list of currently confirmed sessions for the 2010 event go to: **sxsw.com/interactive/talks/panels**

SCREENBURN AT SXSW

is the video game component of the event. In addition to panel programming and evening events, attendees enjoy the three-day ScreenBurn Arcade, which is hands-on play-space for exhibitors, consumers, independent developers, and soon-to-be masters of the gaming world.

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